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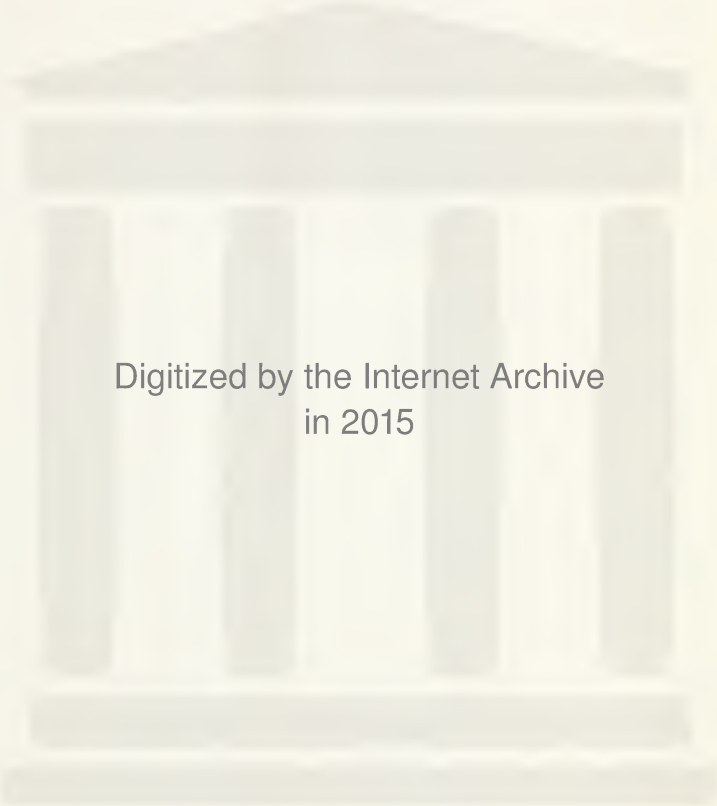
C.P.J.



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潔白交響曲絕句

皎皎梨絮白萬枝花

爭发佳人倚樹立誦

戔月光華

Blossoms on the pear
and a woman in the moonlight
reads a letter there.

THE JOURNAL

JOURNAL STAFF

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The **Journal** *is published four times during the academic year — in November, January, March and May—by the students of Wofford College, Spartanburg, South Carolina. Subscription rate is $2.50 per year. The magazine is supervised financially by the Wofford College Publications Board. Mr. Ed Minus is advisor.*

O Basho! O Enshiu! O Rikiu!
What shall become of us?
Moon is dead!
Moon is dead!
Lifeless chunk of rock,
icy splinter of a creation
that never was.
No more the golden harvest disc
No more the pale winter's eye
No more the cool light from lantern's glow
No more the dog howl red coal

And I, the idiot's I,
retire for the sleep –
frog burrowed into pond mud.

SUN WORSHIPERS

Show to me the horned faces
Of Aztec children baking in the sun,
Lain down on beds of sacrifice.
Their youth grows even as flint dagars
Cut it down.

Show to me the drugged eyes
Of Aztec children whose hearts were stolen
As penitence to pirate priests.
Those children have seen the stone crocodiles,
And been swallowed by their toothy smiles.

Show to me the tallest temple steps
Where calandars are made of stone.
Show those shrines to me,
Worshipped by whorish priests
Made for vengeful gods
Built on children's blood and bones.

SAILING

Across the untouched water, rising from behind a white band of beach, are houses like grey faces carved in a chalk blue sky.

IT COULD BE APPLIED TO PEOPLE

Her eyes burned like ice
As she told me the news

Then the room was dark
The kind of darkness
That illuminates helplessness
    and pain

Her words
Flew in and out the windows
Like screams from an orphanage
    on fire
Things no man can stand
    to hear

And yet, I heard
I heard her say
    The sun is black

I bled a smile
That might've looked like
    happiness (from the moon)
And as I turned
To face myself
She whispered "I love you"

BATHROOM

Cloudy water and broken whiteknobs
A dirty cloth and golden stains
The ceiling giving itself to the floor
A tarnished reflection and a certain smell

Soft lights and a dull glow
Brass and bright marbles
Sweet smells and long mirrors
Does it matter where we go?

BEFORE THERE WAS A PARKING LOT

I remember the
house,
White and dull,
against the blue-gray
water.

Its roof had turned-down
eaves
and the awnings were
built low over the
windows.

RUSKING '73

TECHNICOLOR SYNECDOCHE

Taxonomic Notes on "Redneck"

English, following as it does a standard syntactic sequence. And "redneck" is a typical product of that pattern and of compounding in general; it is fundamental, folksy, and graphic. "Redneck" is also a term that has experienced a revival of sorts in the past few years – especially among the young and especially among the more au courant young, for whom the redneck (like the general, the jock, the bureaucrat) is one of the extreme points of that social compass by which they take their bearings.

There is division of opinion about just when and how the term "redneck" came into being, but there is no doubt that it's an Americanism. It was probably first used to describe a member of "the Southern rural laboring class." Morphologically, it follows a marked tendency in American English to categorize intellectual or social types in terms of physiognomy and to employ compound synecdochic labels. There are nouns like "numbskull," "highbrow," "paleface", "egghead," and "longhair"; and abjectives like "slackjawed," "thickheaded," "stiffnecked," "sharpnosed," and "fairhaired." "Redneck," like most of these epithets, is generally a term of disparagement (a quality which might indicate derivation from "rednecked" as applied to animals and birds): current usage evinces further pejoration and generalization. Although there may have been no connotation of bigotry when the term was first coined, it was certainly not without racial implications. The word is, after all, a literal description of the sunburned back of the neck of white Southern farmers and field hands. A black man could not be a "redneck" – literally. Nor could the majority of the young who revived the phrase, since the backs of

One of the simplest and most satisfying techniques for creating new words in English (as in many other languages) is compounding. All that's involved is the need or desire for the new word and a little stickum. The patterns that result are often quiltish – even coltish: noun + verb = noun (hogwash) verb + noun = noun (rotgut) verb + noun = adjective (snaptop) adjective + noun = verb (grandstand) adjective + verb = noun (firstborn) noun + adjective = adverb (clockwise) adverb + noun = verb (upstage) adjective + noun = noun (redneck).

The last item in this list (there are, of course, many other possible combinations) illustrates a pattern that is especially frequent in

their necks were shielded from the sun by hair. As for the more generalized use of the term, red-necks are no longer peculiar to the South or to the laboring class (Archie Bunker lives in Queens; and all of us know politicians whose collars are at least a shade or so whiter than the backs of their necks). But for most people the word probably still suggests religious fundamentalism and political conservatism. It's ironic, in that connection, that the two extremes of the political spectrum should share the same color.

It is not surprising, though, that color is the significant descriptive element in this compound. It is far from unique in that respect. One can encounter in English the greeneyed bluenose, the blackhearted yellowbelly, the redskinned Blackfoot, the silver-tongued greybeard, and even the rosey-cheeked brown-noser. It is clear, then, that "red-neck" is a very typical product. Taxonomically speaking, a chromatic synecdochic compound pejorative.—Professor Copperhead

SOUTHERN
SERVES
THE SOUTH

THE DANCING ANT

I was lying in my straw bed with no particular thoughts in mind. I rolled my head on my pillow and noticed an ant crawling on the floor. The little thing walked about inspecting everything it ran into; it seemed as if the ant thought it owned the room. But of course this could not be so, for this was my room; indeed, this room was part of my grass hut.

I continued watching the ant; it crawled up my night stand and after reaching the top it began to prance about; in fact, if you could imagine—as I more than often do—I would say this ant was dancing; yes, dancing: maybe an Irish jig or a fast Russian step. The little insect's feet were moving so fast that the creature appeared to be two connecting shots rolling about in a circle. I was absolutely fascinated by this dance; in fact, I thought I imagined hearing a drum beat that the little fellow might be adhering to, and as my imagination carried me further I could hear the ant chanting some wild chant as though it were worshiping a god of a local native tribe.

The ant soon stopped the masquerade and began speaking in a language that I could understand. The words the fellow spoke were real and distinct. They could not possibly have been produced by my imagination. The ant was yelling at the top of its lungs; it was commanding me, telling me that I must leave my hut, that this was no longer a place for me to live, and that the ants were coming to take me away. He — I mean the ant — continued to repeat this refrain, but I would not listen; instead, I sat and laughed at my crazy imagination. How in the world could an ant talk? But still it did! I saw it; I heard it speak. Yes, I heard it speak!

Again the ant screamed at me; it told me it was leaving and that I should follow him if I wanted to survive the impending danger. I didn't heed its little command, for I was confused; either I was going crazy or that ant was as real as a character out of a storybook fable. Well, regardless, the ant was gone now — and within five minutes so was my hut. Yes, my imagination was right, the little ant was right, and whoever spoke the commands was right; and as I lie here in my bed covered with ants I think, with the last remaining seconds of my life, of all my failures just because I did not heed my imagination.

Moral: Believe in your imagination; it is as true as reality.

THE RIVER LIFFEY

The Liffey slides back from the sea
And climbs the walls
To the top of its stain.
It hangs limp
In the tidal chains.
It lolls down the stone channel,
Dark with the stench of Dublin,
Bearing rats
Past granite docks.
Perhaps it buckles and churns
When the moon lowers it
Back into the waves.
But it rolls like thick blood at night.
The heavy river wrinkles
Noiselessly in the wind.
Brittle trees by the walls
Gouge the pale air.
Gulls bark
And fall like hinged ashes.

JOYCE AND UNCLE JOE

Joyce was a dog, not anything special, just an average-sized dog, not too big, not too small, and enjoyable mean. Joyce lived with the Fink family and belonged to Billy and Eddie Fink. But Joyce did not care for people or anything else. If anyone came near her pen or even dared to enter the confines, she would playfully tear them to shreds and with a sparkling eye would watch them run bleeding away.

Uncle Joe was a Teddy Bear from the northern part of California. He indulged in tobacco, fine drink, and was very well learned. His favorite pasttime was lying on the bed reading, wearing his yellow short-sleeved Gantt shirt. Occasionally Joe would take trips to the Fink house and sit by the T V or lie in the grass, but most of all Joe loved to sit outside Joyce's pen and converse in Latin or talk about Joyce's *Ulysses* or the philosophical views of Dostoevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*. Joyce didn't understand any of this and Joe loved to tell her how dumb she was.

All Joyce was interested in was a little sex, sleeping, and being mean. Joe never really understood any of this and passed it off to the lower mental state of the dog and especially to Joyce's breeding. (Joyce didn't know who her parents were.)

One day Joe ventured out alone and walked over to Joyce's place of residence. It seems Joyce had been taking an interest in improving herself. At first, Joe thought it quite preposterous – but then it appealed to him and even amused him. For what reason, who knows? It's been found that no one really knows what Teddy Bears are up to. Joe would think to himself how impossible it would be to help Joyce; everyone knows you can't help *those* kinds of dogs.

This particular day Joyce had scattered her dog food (Gravy Train) all over. She had been throwing pieces of it at ants. Just then, Joe walked up ready to read Joyce some Shakespeare, even though he knew Joyce wouldn't be able to comprehend it. As he walked up smoking his pipe and humming Beethoven's 9th, he spotted one of the nuggets of Gravy Train, which he stopped and picked up. He then approached Joyce. "Hmm, my dear Joyce, what is this?" "Well, I'm not sure, but some say if you touch those things with your naked hands it'll kill you." "Oh my God!" and Joe dropped the nugget. "What'll I do?" "Come on in here. This stuff ought to fix you up." All it was was her water bowl, but just as Joe couldn't distinguish the dog food he was baffled by the substance that looked like water. Joe squeezed through the fence. When he got inside Joyce started laughing and explained

the reality of the situation. Joe didn't think the situation funny at all and reprimanded her – whereat and forthwith Joyce walked up to him and tore him to shreds. Afterwards, she commented, "You may be smart but you ain't nothing but a stuffy ass! Ha, Ha!"

MISSISSIPPI VISIT

Uncle John's drunk,
Aunt Clem's insane.
I don't know what I'm doing here,
But I'm mighty glad I came.

The yellow dog's got cataracts.
Me, I got the shits.
I'm still trying to figure out
How it all fits.

Clem plays the organ
When John goes to bed;
It's the only time he'll let her –
Says it's bad for his head.

Uncle John's a hypochondriac,
Takes purple pills a lot –
Washed down with alcohol
And sweetened up with pot.
The other night Clem woke up
And found him on the floor.
The doctor said an overdose;
John said his ass was sore.

I think they're just a little off.
I better wait and see.
John and Clem – the dog as well –
May think the same of me.

DAY'S END

The blue and white
Drain after the sun.
Branches claw into the spilling sky
But, the grey soaks through the
Black trees to the earth.

Feeble stars
Draw dim voices
From shadow houses.
A black horizon
Of trees and houses
Gathers around the yard.

Neighbors hum and smoke
Into the sky.
Their ashes smolder
On the moist ground
As they move to the light.

In the clearing emptiness
Space falls into the stars
And the earth is loose.

Darkness dries the sweat of our bodies;
A movement reminds me you're there;
We swing in a swing without chains;
And live a love without words.

Flung down on a burning desert,
Sheathed in a sheet of white snow,
We swing in a swing without chains;
and live a love without words.

Your eyes ask blue unspoken questions;
Quick breathing is not a reply.
We swing in a swing without chains,
And live a love without words.

I slow your mouth
And bend your lips
And send your tongue
Searching your palate.
I make you strain
For a child's thoughts
Which raise a stranger's brow
I am not peanut butter.

I am quick as water
or slow as syrup.
I flow between your fingers
But you avoid my touch.
I am the flesh of your words.

It's still there
Between Nietzsche and Galilee
As close as a whisper
As distant
As the letter
        that didn't come again today.

Somewhere
Beneath grass and graphs
And assorted things
That used to dull
The pain

It's all still there
I know I think I feel

You hold it
In your hand

Calligraphy is believed by many Chinese to be a more essential and purer art than painting. The exalted state of this art becomes clearer if we consider that the reverence and awe with which Chinese hold the great calligraphers of antiquity is comparable to that with which we regard the classical composers of Europe. The balance of two ideals marked the great moments of Chinese art: *spontaneity* – a Taoist virtue, and tradition, a Confucian "virtue."

Deriving his inspiration from nature's panorama or as was often the case, from wine, the calligrapher feels life gathering in his mind, feels it tensing his arm, flowing through his wrist and entering the brush, whereupon the brush plunges down as a bird of prey and leaves in its wake a black swoop of words. The "force" that is gathering in the calligrapher's mind and suffusing his entire being and artistic expression is *Ch'i,* that is "the breath of life," that which animates nature. When the great calligraphers speak of spontaneity, the picture that often comes to mind is of an ungoverned natural force, a river. Su Tung-po (Sung Dynasty) likened his writing to a river which, when encountering mountains or rocks circumscribed a winding course around them. *Ch'i* must describe every character; its manifestation in calligraphy is the result of its spontaneous flowing *through* the artist onto the surface. However, calligraphy in its most impulsive expression, cannot be anarchic. The flow of characters must respond to the *traditional*, ideal form, which, of course, is unchanging.

Eighty-four rules of calligraphic composition have been formulated – a testament to the subtle refinement, and meticulous analysis of this delicate art. We may mention a few points of composition here. Every brush should have "bone," – strength, and "sinew," little, but not too little "flesh". Each character must stand firmly, and its elements should not be crowded or loose. Deadening internal symmetry should be avoided. The specificty and multiplicity of ideals with regards to calligraphy is staggering, however everything is subordinated to "life-breath," or *Ch'i.*

Calligraphy is, without a doubt, individual. Indeed, calligraphy is believed to reveal the character of the artist, all that he has suffered, his triumphs, his failings, etc. Calligraphy is supposed to mirror the appearance of the writer. Ben-Ami Scharfstein cites the countem-

porary artist, Chiang Yee (in his book *The Mind of China,* p. 52):

From examples of the Emperor Hi-tsung's writing, executed in the style peculiar to him and termed Slender Gold, we can infer that he was a person of handsome appearance, tall and slim, meticulous as to detail, with a somewhat effeminate temperament; we can even affirm that he was slow and measured of speech. Again, if we study the writing of Su Tung-p'o suggests to me a man fatter, shorter, more careless in nature than Mi Fei, but broad-minded, vigorous, a great laughter-maker and a great laugher. . .These are rough judgments only; many fine points could be deduced from more careful study of the written characters. A man who is able to balance the tensions of the characters he draws has arrived at some expressible balance in his life.

Note: Ben-Ami Scharfstein's superb book, *The Mind of China* (Basic Books, 1974) is my major reference and is highly recommended to any who would study this fascinating subject in greater detail.

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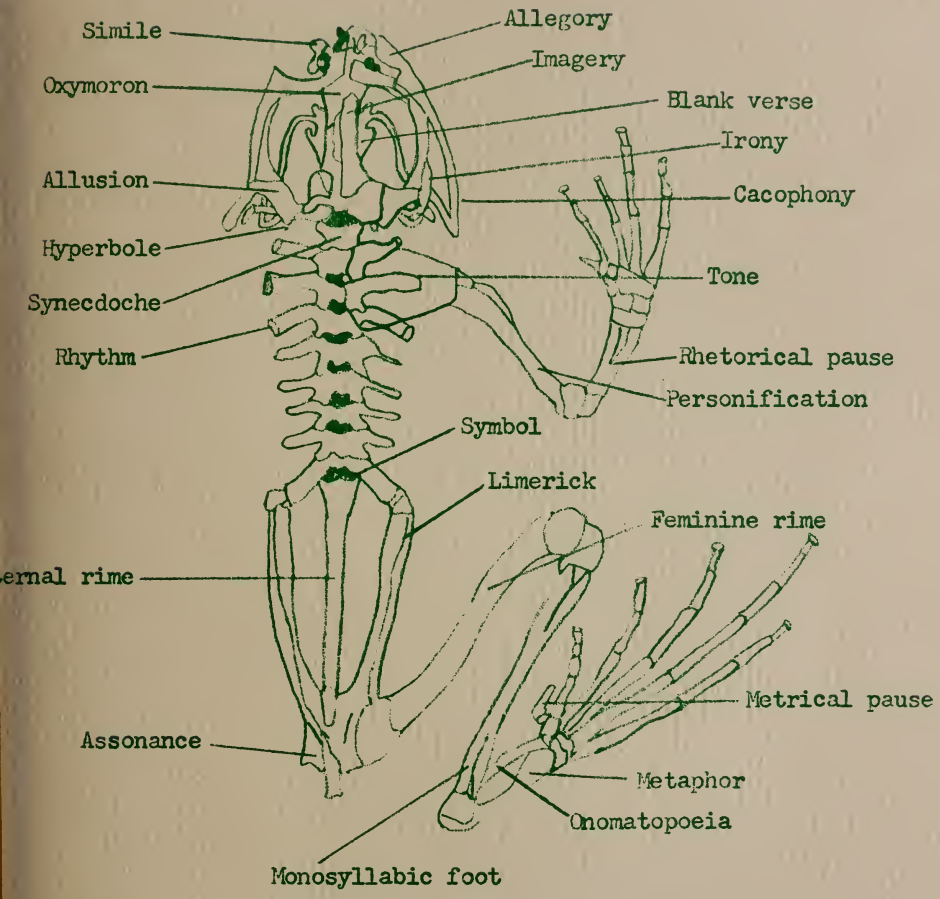
Simile
Allegory
Imagery
Oxymoron
Blank verse
Irony
Allusion
Cacophony
Hyperbole
Tone
Synecdoche
Rhetorical pause
Rhythm
Personification
Symbol
Limerick
Feminine rime
ernal rime
Metrical pause
Assonance
Metaphor
Onomatopoeia
Monosyllabic foot

THE JOURNAL

Someone else's flecks of skin
on the library's formica table top
indicates deep thinking
or intense scratching.

January 1975
Vol. LXXXVII, No. 2

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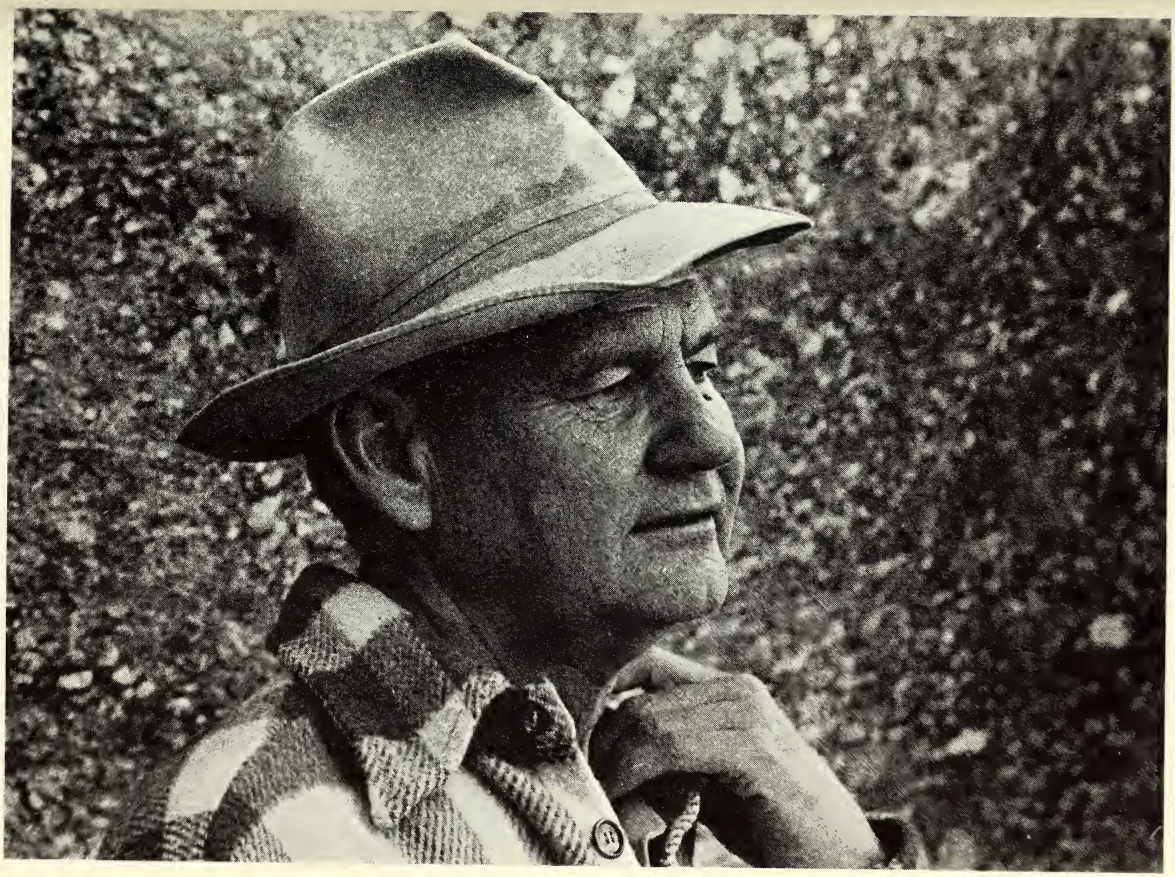


STORY TELLING IN WILSON'S STORE

I remember the days when I would go down to grandfather's store, I was pretty young then, and I guess the stories I heard there made a right big impression on my imagination. My grandfather had an old buddy that could tell a story that would make your heart pound and beat with excitement. I recall him telling a story that really scared me. I can see that old-timer now, sitting on an empty cracker barrel next to the soot-black, stove pipe oven. I can hear him call me over, telling me to pull up a box and have a seat. I do as he says, but I have to sit staring at the old man while he loads his pipe, packs it just right; then lighting it with one of those smelly sulfur matches, a cloud of smoke so thick that I lose sight of the story-telling elder, and from behind this fog I hear him clear his throat and slowly the cloud rises, lifting the curtain for another show.

"Well my boy, see those clouds out the window there, they remind me of the day the rain fell on Old Blackmon's farm; no one expected it. Why did it rain? Well, the fact is no one knows. The point I'm getting at is that for the past five years after Boe's death, it didn't get close to getting damp over on his farm. I mean you could spit on his farm and it would sizzle like bacon-a-frying."

"Well it was that very same day, I was driving thru Boe's land and my radiator started singing and steam started bellowing like my . . ." The old man paused to pull a draw of smoke from his pipe, then replied "pipe smoke, here. You can guess what that meant. Hot damn! Oops! Forgive me, Lord! Excuse me, Son. Like I was saying that damn . . . I mean, that old radiator needed water and I had not-a-drop. I guess I should have known better, riding thru that dry farm like that without any water. Well I sure didn't want to sit in my truck and shrivel up like a raisin, so I started walking to town. Man was it hot; it was so hot I was seeing camels.

I was passing the Blackmon home and old Boe's grave, bless his soul, I started thinking; you know it just ain't right – the way old Boe died – starving to death after five years of drought. He was so dog-gone stubborn, that man wouldn't take charity from anyone, not even a lick from his dog. I can hear him now.

"If the good Lord meant for me to have food he would have given me rain for my crops – he hadn't seen fit so I guess he ain't gonna give me any."

"Yes, he died; just up and starved. I remember burying Boe (I was a pall-bearer) that casket was so light I swear I think it was made of cardboard. After he was put into the ground preacher Martin started reading the Psalms and boy let me tell you did it rain. I have never seen so much rain in all my life; I was

afraid that old Boe's coffin was going to float a way – in fact – if I remember correctly – a few of us men had to put concrete cinders on top of it right during the pryaer cause the rain had filled that grave so; it looked like old Boe was ready to float down to the river. I guess this inspired Reverend Martin cause he started singing – while all of us came in – "Shall we gather at the River."

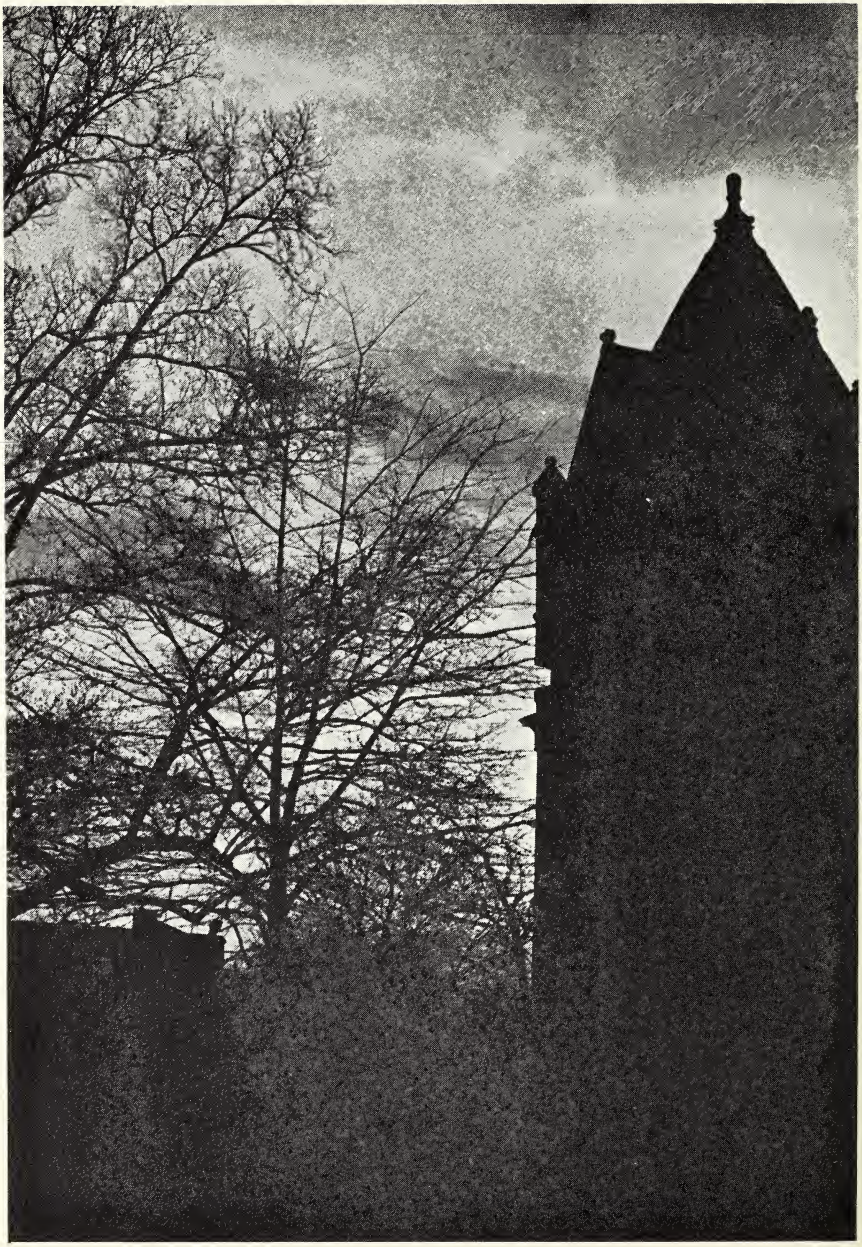
"Yep that's the way it was the day they buried Boe."

Getting back to the day I was thinking all this. Like I said I had to walk all the way to town, I got my water: I drank more than I could carry in a bucket, but, anyway – oh yes, I think I had to buy a new pair of shoes, the other pair just plumb melted off my feet. Putting all this aside, I was lucky enough to catch a ride back to old Boe's farm, but not to my truck that was about halfway, somewheres in-the-middle of Blackmon's land. I had to walk that distance cause my friend was afraid his rites might melt off or somethin'.

"Well after seeing a few more camels, feeling some hot leather, and sweating wet I was back at my truck again. I started to pour the water into the radiator when I notice some clouds in the sky, just like them out the window there. As soon as I put the first drop of water in the funnel it began to rain, man it rained, just like the day old Boe was buried. The rain came down so hard it tore my shirt to threads, just tore it right off my back.

"I got my truck cranked and made it back to town; I came in this store and told ya grandpa about what happened. Your grandpa turned as white as a duck feather. Shoot I thought it was cause I was wet and didn't have a shirt. But that wasn't the case; you see your 'grand' is like a calendar, he remembers when any event happened. Well, when he told me that five years ago to the day was when they buried old Boe; I took it as a coincidence, but your grandpaw set me straight, he told me that old Boe's burial was five years to the day the last time it rained. So what this means is that it rains every five years on the anniversary of Boe's burial.

"Let's see my good old pocket watch says I got to get going . . . . gotta to feed my chickens . . Hey look it's raining – well I . . . I don't believe it. Sonny, ask your grandpaw if it ain't so! Today is the anniversary of Boe's death, five years to the day it rained on me. Hey wait – where you going – come back – I didn't mean to scare you."



CASTLEGREGORY

(for Michael Dooley, 1870-1954)

The wind
Striking from the sea,
Flogging a single cloud,
Lashing rain for a moment,
To ravish the perfection of Dingle's beauty.

On the road, on that spit of land,
For the moment the cloud is lashed,
Arrested at the sight:
Plough horse, horse plough,
Reinman, ploughman.
Caught in the stasis
Of the wind-swept, rain-lashed moment,
The desolate quarter-acre,
The garden patch.

Twenty years since,
Against another sky,
Himself prodding the ancient mother
As the fathers had always done.

Myself arrested,
Not in the wind, the rain
In the car, windows against rain and wind.
Hand on door,
Needing only a turn of the wrist
Lost. Unable.
Even for a snap.

Floating into my life
through dreams
you wore a yellow dress
that zipped below your back
your shoulders always bare.

but time forgets lovers
searching for each other
where we couldn't be.
    Our strength
was overpowering.
I stood it in the corner
and watched it dancing
as it laughed at me.
A part of me
I didn't know
Knew me.

Today we live beyond the shadows
cast by our doubts.
Our love has grown
    reaching out,
finally touching life.

You love me like a woman
your shoulders always bare.

CATCH A FALLING STAR

Sitting there, talking on a hewnstone wall.
A chilly wind forcing both of us closer to the other.
Sounds of the night flowed around us,
the murmers in the cabins
blending with our own.
As we talked her eyes understood me.
They seemed to see —
All the images alive in my brain.

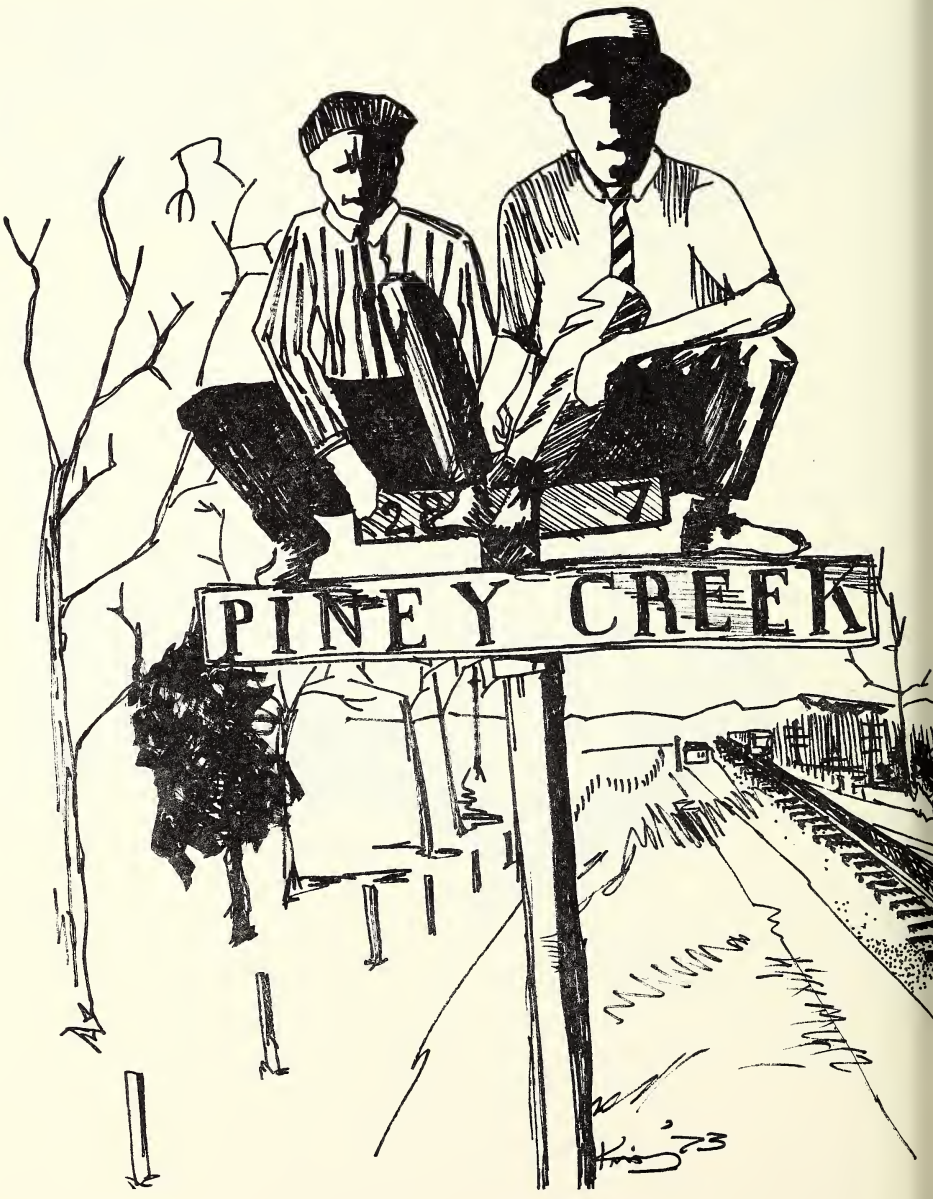
A TASTE OF GLITTER

Glitterman, where have you been
your future passed you by.
The time has changed
your loneliness
to something you can feel,
and closed your eyes
to the man you nearly were,
and almost recognized.

RICKING '73

STONE WALLS, WEST CLARE

They have bested you, old fathers,
The young ones with their new walls.
They run evenly, smoothly
Along the laneways, byways,
Not like yours, mountain sheep
Scattering patchwork over hill and bog.
The visitors and the Bord do approve.
Neat, symmetrical, the stones lie flat.
No hint of the old bitch's wit,
Gnarled, snarling despair of Euclid,
Deformed, aborted issue.
Still, enough of the old magic, the old genius,
No mortar in between, just a bit on top,
To accent the lovely symmetry of it all.
A work of ease and of art.
None of your shoddy irregularities,
The miraculous stacking, the desparate hope
That the old bitch might bring forth
More than just stone.


PINEY CREEK

(from the mail order catalogue of fantasies)

some talk about chickens
one of every color
making eggs grade A
large, medium, regular,
some small
for little people.
cows with good, cold fresh
ready drink milk, maybe
even one chocolate.
pigs in the yard
where ever they want
making mud
rich, thick, sloppy.
little people in the hay barn
lovers by the creek
blue skies with sometime
rainbows, a little snow,
with lots of
sunshine
for my garden.

DUBLIN

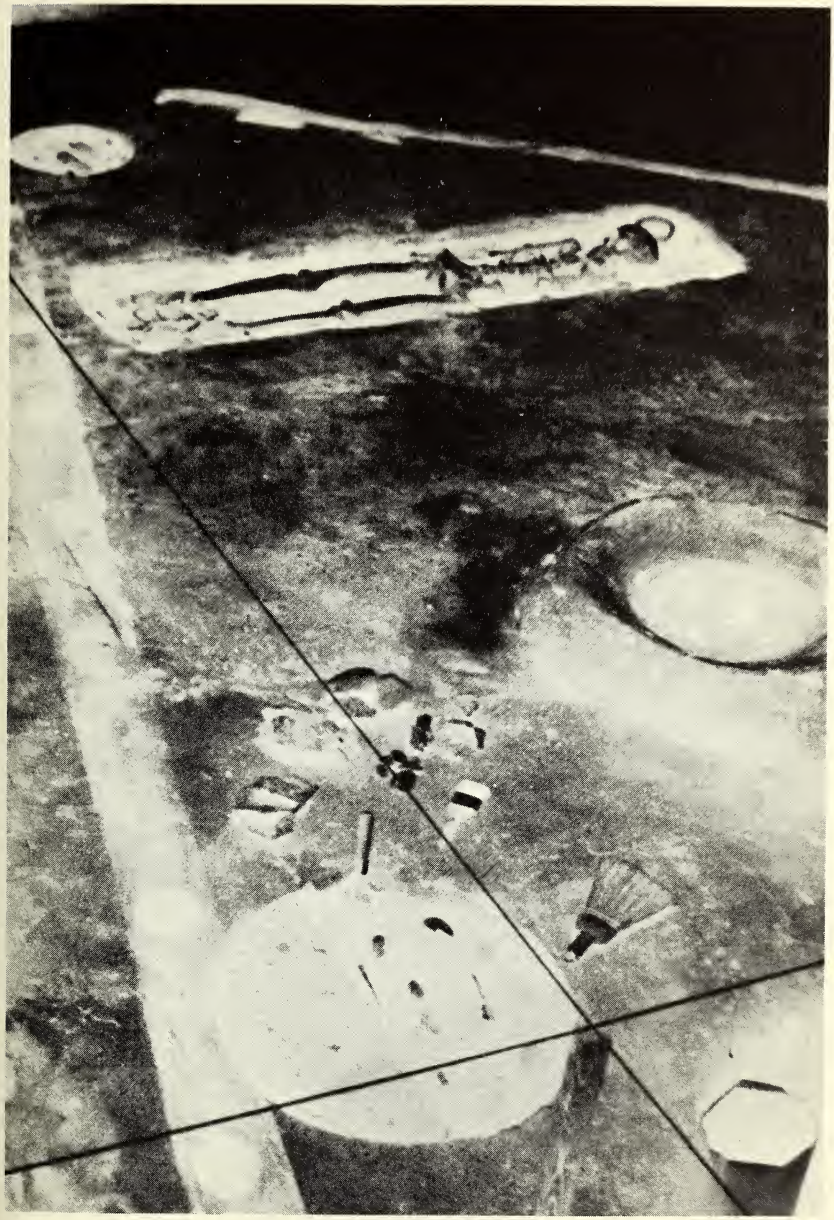
(for T&SR)

Georgian splendor gone
To Victorian Squalor,
The Dean's despair, Joyce's joke,
Behan's boast, Kavanagh's curse,
An old two-shilling whore.

But as the summer sun
Drops behind the Quays
Or the October mist
Lifts from the Wicklow Hills,

She becomes
Anna Livia Plurabella.

And we return her our hearts
To break once again.



CRACKERJACKS

Somewhere in my past
And in my future
And always
In the center of my mind
There lies a box
Sealed by experiences
I haven't yet had
And emotions
I can't understand

Time and again
With leather hands
I've tried in vain
To rip off the chains
    And open the box
Knowing well that it contains
What I will be
When I am a man

But always, always
The same results
Bleeding fingers and disgust

A brown-eyed girl
Once rattled the box
As if trying to guess
The secret inside
She never guessed
But I didn't mind
I guess that I liked
Guessing games
At the time.

As we sat and talked
She toyed with the chains
And they became ribbons
In her puzzle hands
And though the bows
Held as fast as the locks
Together
We could have undone the knots
Picked up the sky
And opened the box

But
When the conversation moved her way
When I asked the question
She ran away
Leaving her hand facedown on the table

The box remains
And the ribbons
Once again are chains
But during this interlude
I have changed

The box is mine
And I'll rely
On water and time
To rust away the chains

And finally
When strengthened by
  my own defeats
And tempered by
  mistakes
I stand
Ready to break the rusty chains
        tear off the locks
        and throw open the box
I'm sure I'll find
A mirror inside

EYES SOMETIMES

Looking through paneless windows
with their curveless lines
and deepening shadows
people see them

Small vicious spiders creep
carrying their bite
stretching and jointing legs
people see them

The chimneys remnant of a house
surrounded by a forgotten yard
standing like pinnacles in the woods
people see them

Belching arches of burps
the street sweeper nods
and crosses back again
people see them

That beautiful girl
with motioning hips
and a flexing neck
people see them

The stoplites suspended
of red yellow green
slow stop hurry on
people see them

Eyes of purest white
with beauty of center
and concern in their contact
people see them

sometimes

NOVEMBER DUSK

Icy wind breaks across my pate
As the colors of autumn fade
Into winter's dull uniform gray

A cold dusk augurs much
The hoary face of winter's cold
When harvest time is past

Freezing rain falls
Never much, just enough to
Cling painfully at my beard

Our discourse bated by
Panting breaths and swirling winds
Continues despite all

Fall's dead leaves crumble under
Our feet, proving the imminent
Winter is ready to arrive

Sounds of city, sounds of country
Strident voices of both cry out
We listen, faintly perceiving dissonance

Such a usual November day
And we continue walking on
With winter before us

1675
MG

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THE JOURNAL

THE STAFF

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Ed Minus

This issue of the *Journal* is devoted to the work of students in English 352 (Mr. Minus's Workshop in the Writing of Ficition and Poetry). Although several students in that class submitted impressive prose manuscripts much longer than any included here, the limitations of space and the desire for balance precluded our using them.

STRUGGLING FOR SLEEP IN A RADIO

THAT IS DRIFTING THROUGH NEW ORLEANS

The streetlight splatters
A yellow-spined halo on the window screen
Which is rattled dull by bugs.

My eyes have been riding the clock since one,
Waiting for sleep to eat some of this time.
The mattress sweats under my back.
It is work to suck any air
Out of this room.

The radio fades in and out of New Orleans,
A mellow noise, "twenty-six until the hour of three."

I'm falling into the radio –
Into a droning all-night club.
A row of wooden fans loll
From a narrow ceiling.
A clarinet flutters
And a piano clinks with the glass,
Broken by a chorus of slaps and hums.

I'm filling with cotton
As I fall through New Orleans.

– Keith Walker

JAMES

Sometimes he was too honest
Like a second conscience
But even more exacting
than the first

He said his poems
Came from a hole so deep
That they didn't make sense
in the light

Once he slipped me
A nightmare capsule
So we'd be able
to communicate better

He never smiled
Except when he was stoned
But that smile made sense
in the light

And in the dark

— Dean Greene

TELEPHONE SWEETIE

Brooks Breeden, after an oppressive day in school and a long night with the books, decides to call his high school sweetheart who is attending college a few hundred miles away; he calls in hopes of having Patricia uplift his broken spirit.

"Lets see now . . . where is that number? Hey Allen, have you seen a pink envelope with a telephone number on the back?" Brooks asks his roommate who is primping his hair in front of the mirror.

"Naw, have you seen my comb?" Allen asks.

"No . . . ah! Here it is — behind my mattress!" Brooks replies.

"Oh good . . . What was it doing there?"

"It must have fallen off my shelf the other night."

"Hey, that's not my comb!" replies Allen.

"I didn't say it was. This is the envelope I've been looking for,"

"Sorry, ol' buddy . . . I thought ya found my comb."

Brooks thinks to himself of how stupid his roommate is; he goes to the phone and dials.

"Let's see — 1. . .9. . .1. . .9. . .7. . .5. . .2. . .9 . .2. . .6. . .3— Come on, operator. Oh, it's 583 7826."

Brooks impatiently waits for the call to go through. Finally, over all the static.

"Hello."

"Hey, Sherry, let me speak to Patricia," Brooks asks.

"This is Patricia."

"Oh, I'm sorry, Pat. Ha . . . ha. . . .I thought. . .Well, you sounded like your roomy."

"Well, I hope that is a compliment."

"Patricia, I'm sorry . . . please don't be mad."

"O.K. Who is this, anyway?" Patricia asks.

"Pat, it's me . . . Brooks."

She giggles. "I'm sorry, Brooks . . . you surprised me. It's after eleven."

"Well, who else would be calling this late?" asks Brooks.

"How should I know? Sherry's boy friend maybe."

"I'm not Sherry's boy friend, I'm yours."

"Well it didn't sound that way at first."

"Let's drop the subject. What ya been doing?" asks Brooks.

"Nothing. And you?"

"Nothing," Brooks replies.

"Well, I certainly see why you are always complaining about your bad grades: all you do is nothing."

"What do you mean? You make good grades yet you do nothing yourself," Brooks replies.

"That's because I'm perfect, and perfect people always do good."

"Even if they do nothing?" asks Brooks.

"That's right!" Pat replies.

"Pat, I'm depressed. I hope that . . ."

"What else is new?" interrupts Pat.

"Will you listen to me?" asks Brooks.

"No!"

"Pa . . . tri . . . cia, gosh . . . you know how to hurt a guy."

"Really?" She giggles again. "Oh, goody!"

"Pat, why do you do this to me?"

"Do what, Brooks . . . dear?"

"You know, Pat. I needn't tell you."

"Ah, please, please," more giggling." Please!"

"Pat, Ha, ha . . . ha! For some reason it's hard to be mad at you."

"Why Brooks Breeden, why on earth would you want to be mad at me?"

"Because you think you're perfect and I can't stand perfect people."

"But Brooks, I thought you like me."

"I do . . . I . . . I love you!"

"But you just said you hate perfect people."

"Yes, but you aren't perfect."

"But you said I was."

"I did not. I said you think you are."

"I don't think I am, my mother told me I was."

"Well you aren't," replied Brooks.

"Am so!"

"Are not!"

"Am so!"

"Are not!"

"Am so!"

"Are not!"

"Are not!"

"Am – oh, Pa. . . tri . . . cial!" Brooks confusingly exclaimed. She laughs out loud. "Ah, did poor little baby get tonguey tied?"

"Patricia, Ha, Ha, if you, Ha . . . ."

"Poor little baby . . . ah, poor thing . . ."

"Pa . . . tri . . . cia, shut up! Shut . . . up! Ha, ha . . . listen, like I was trying to tell you. I am depressed, and I had hoped you could cheer me up."

"Well," Pat states.

"Well . . . what?" Brooks asked.

"Did I succeed?" asks Pat.

"Ha, Ha. I guess you did, pat . . . I love you."

"You do not!"

"I do so."

"You don't."

"I do . . . Wait, let's not start that again . . . .I better hang up, it's getting late."

"Well, do you want me to bill you now or at the end of the month?" asks Patricia.

"What – what are you talking about?"

"I don't render my services free, you know."

"What services?" asks Brooks.

"Psychiatric, dear . . . you know: shrink services," replies Patricia.

"Don't be funny, Pat!"

"I'm serious. My major is psychology."

"It is not . . . last week it was interior decorating," replied Brooks.

"Well, good night . . . I have a test tomorrow, Brooks."

"I'm sorry; I didn't mean to keep you away from studying."

"That's okay. It's a psychology test, and it's one cases of your Nature."

"Very funny . . . . Pat, do you miss me? . . .Pat, speak . . . say something."

"Good night, Brooks."

"Not that . . . say you miss me."

"Never! Oh, well . . . just a little."

"Don't say anything else . . . that's good enough . . .good night, Pat."

"Good night, Brooks!"

"Good night, Pat . . . I love you."

Brooks hangs the phone up and falls to his bed; wearily, he exclaims:

"Rats! . . . I'm depressed!"

"Why?" Allen asks.

"Well, what's the use in talking to a girl if you can't see, feel, or smell her?"

– Randy Miller

LYING DEEP

Lying deep in the darkness of the world,
I wish only to be left alone.
My matters at night concern no others,
Prowling only out of instinctive desrie
to quench a hunger.

Being a roach is a necessity to me
But to you I'm a nuisance to be stepped on.
You come in and turn on lights
To blind me and send me spasmodically
retreating to safety.

May you suffer in hell
For that soft crunch felt under your shoe.
Someday when your race is gone
Roaches will be rewarded for their meekness
and inherit the world.

— Ziggy Clayton

COLLECTING SNAKES AT THE ABANDONED GRANITE QUARRY

When we leave the paved roads
And go into the woods,
The world seems distant and unimportant.
Only the rusted Blue Ribbons
Remind us that people know the quarry.
As we push through the scrub pines,
Thoughts of our first time down this path
Tell us the quarry is just ahead.
Suddenly — one sheer gray cliff
Drops to the floor below:
The quarry looks like an immense heel print.

The walls decrease in height
Until huge stone boulders spill into the woods.
Pine trees dominate the rim
And also spring from the quarry floor.
These are trees that grow after the trucks have gone.

We pick our way over the cracking granite
And abandoned blasting holes,
Scanning the dry rock ledges that lie
Exposed to the late afternoon sun.
A shed skin catches the light:
Brown and translucent,
Buzzing with yellow jackets not yet
Killed by the frost.
The skin, moist when shed, has now dried
To a fragile, scaled thinness
On the warm, lichen-covered rock.
Several quick brown fence lizards
Stand sunning, undisturbed,
As we move down over the ledges.
We are nearly on them when they slip
Into a crevice, to appear on a rock
Twenty feet away.

The quarry floor is covered
With the long-frozen thunder
Of fallen granite slabs.
The stones we kick and walk on
Range from gray gravel to baseball-
Sized hunks and blade-edged rocks
Left behind by blasting caps.

We turn to look back at the top of the cliff.
The copper-colored sunlight
Streams through the trees and boulders.
Dark granite lives with long
Slow shadows crawl among the rocks
As we walk along the pine floor
Under the dying sky.

– John Lane

A SEMESTER OF UNUSUAL SUNDAYS

The bright sun was somehow out of place on those mornings. It beamed so uselessly off the empty cars in the dorm lot and made you squint to look across their windshields. The silent dormitories seemed as foreign as they had two years before, when I had first seen them and convinced myself to like them. Walking out in the parked cars, I would notice how empty the roads were. Their being empty was odd --the same roads had been so full of cars and the noises that cars make just hours before.

As I walked, the squealing turns and strained accelerations and stops that had been so loud last night whirred through my thoughts. The beer cans lying in the curb were covered with sand. They reminded me of the ugly clanging noises they had made the night before when kicked across the pavement. Drunken vocies drawled out indistinct phrases--"Hail ye , I'm drunk, and . . . the house . . . my ass." --and couples mumbled quietly as they passed in the dark; I could still hear and see the images. But the images were so contradictory to the tranquility of the next morning that I would wonder if the quiet really existed.

The College Inn Bar was closed and dark; the brown-stained, poster-paper signs in the windows were curled at the top and bottom. Walking along Trade Street I would feel my movement opposed by the immobile city around me. I wondered why I had gotten up. It could not have been because of personal beliefs, within which I had long ago ceased to have any faith. A digital bank clock across from the church flashed the time, and I hurried to cover the next block and a half. As a child, I had had no choice but to be in church every Sunday. Always sitting in the same pew. I had felt natural in church and somehow guilty if Sunday came and I wasn't there.

There was no steeple on the church at school. The fact of it not being there bothered me. It reminded me of myself and of decisions that I had made without being positive that I was right or wrong. I was continually pulling these decisions back to the surface of my consciousness and rethinking them. On the left, the last two buildings before the church were home. One was a very old. elaborate Spanish-looking house. There were tall evergreens on both sides of the brown lawn, and a tall, round magnolia tree was growing in the middle of the yard. There was no driveway, only a brick sidewalk leading from the front door. The other house had been built or converted into a mortuary. It was a small rectangular, brick building. A large water oak grew beside it and its empty branches spread upward and over the house. BULLARD'S MORTUARY was lettered to the left of the door.

Before I had left for college, it had been made clear to me that my parents wanted me in church. They had always been there with my brothers and me. Church had become a part of our Sundays. As I would climb the brown marble steps, to go into church on those college mornings, I would think of my family and of the way we had never gone into our church together and how my father had always joined us last.

Once inside the steeple-less church the unusual atmosphere of the morning disappeared. It was replaced by the warmth of many people who had all come to a place too small to hold them. The families and old folks sat stiffly but comfortable in the pews. The familiar rituals passed quickly and without thought. I remember the songs most about those services; I knew most of them by heart but never sang. I stood silently--following the words with my eyes or looking around at all the singing people. I picked out the very few that I knew or had seen somewhere before and wondered why they had come. I wondered if anyone in particular in the whole building knew why they had come. I could never really decide.

When the service was over I always left quickly. Outside, the world had begun to awaken and move. The sun reflected brightly off the buildings and onto the street. Little bits of dried grass and paper were whirled around by passing cars, and as I walked back to school it was with a contented, somehow quicker step.

— Clay Brittain

CHILDHOOD

You don't like me when I'm around.
You want to get older, forget about me,
put me behind you.
You don't take time to enjoy me, to
experience me, to take advantage of me.

As you grow older you forget about me
Until one day – you're through with the
hard life – you're tired of being old.
Then you remember me,
you wish for me,
You long for me.
But I'm gone.

– Tommy Shealy

CRAZY HILDA

Whatever happened to Crazy Hilda? She used to wander around the morning glories without any clothes on. Jeffrey Polk followed her on his tractor – he plowed her, all right.

Old man Johnson watched from his wheelchair on the front porch of his old white plantation home. Crazy Hilda used to come by and sit on his face – Only cost him a twenty. Then she'd buy some stumphole liquor and sing the flatland blues.

Hilda got drunk one Sunday morning and stumbled into the church, naked as a thorndike. The preacher said, "Praise the Lord, Child." Crazy Hilda said, "Praise the Lord, my ass!" as she sat down beside Judge Freemont, who got a sheepish grin on his face. When the sermon ended, all the ladies hid their faces and shuffled out the door. All the men waited for Crazy Hilda to walk the center aisle. "Lord help this lost woman," chanted the men, their eyes rocking in their sockets to the rhythm of Hilda's swinging ass as she strolled out the front door of the church.

The Widow Parker called Sherriff Stewart and complained about "That damn Crazy Hilda walking into church without a stitch of clothes on, disrupting the whole church. Look that disrespectful whore up, Sherriff, she's disgrace to this humble town." "Yes ma'm, Miz Parker, right away, ma'm." Sherriff Stewart reached down and grabbed his pants. Hilda got up off her knees. "That's worth a ten, huh, Sherriff Baby?" "Ten hell!" said the Sherriff. "You better git your smelly ass outta here before I lock you up."

Crazy Hilda disappeared last spring. Old Man Johnson still sits on his front porch watching the road. Jeffrey Polk boasts to his friends about "the best piece of ass he ever had." Judge Freemont smiles when he hears Hilda's name. He can still smell that home sweet home he never got to taste. Sherriff Stewart stopped getting calls from the Widow Parker – though she does stand naked in front of her big plate-glass window for the Sherriff to view as he makes his rounds.

I heard Crazy Hilda is living at Springer's Navel with a bunch of hippies. They all walk around naked and have orgies in the corral. That's nothing new for Crazy Hilda. She probably still drinks her stumphole liquor and sings the flatland blues.

– L. R. Perry, Jr.

LAMENTATION

I sat.

I choked.
My insides contracted with
the pain of insults building
into a lump of sores.

I looked.
The pressures of a montonous
existence bubbled as of a
yellow boiling sulphured lava.
The relief-valve oozed with discontent.

I wondered.
Alone, I find myself absent
from friends, Silence tried to
bind my words.
"Why am I always alone?"
"What have I done that's wrong?"

I cried.
The tears were hot as they
formed a shroud of clear wet sorrow.
No one saw them.
No one could care.
The room crushed my essence.

I screamed.
It began in the base of
my heart and bored into
the core of my brain.
Nobody heard it.
Nobody ever does.
Nobody ever will.

I thought.
The solitary sickness devoured
my sould as scenes of loneliness
stabbed the pale grey sorrow.
"I've got to get away!"
"I can't stand ti any longer."
"I cant't take incessant hell forever."

I left.
The dull brownstone confines
released me into the soft
whispery fog.
Leaving hope.
Leaving habit.
Leaving happiness.

I ran.
The hard cold asphalt glistened
with attraction reflecting the
emptiness of the evening.
Running intermittently.
Running impetuously.

I laughed.
The absurdity of the situation
directed me to a bridge overlooking
the towers.
Laughing uncontrollably.

I breathed.
The air permeated my lungs.
cleansing my afflicted spirit.

I jumped.

— Larry Jenkins

VISITING NATURAL BRIDGE

WALKING DOWN THE STONE STEPS, DOWN TO THE BOT–
TOM ALL OF ITS STONE. DAMP MUST AND COLD IT GETS
GRAY THEN THE BOTTOM–

AT THE BOTTOM A WOODEN FLOOR, AN ILL LIGHT, ROOM
AND TABLES. ON THE TABLES LAY RUBBER TOMAHAWKS
AND KNIVER, WOODEN PEACE PIPES, CANES, WHIPS, ALL OF
PAINTED BRIGHTLY–BLUE green YELLOW silver ORANGE pur-
ple yuk and yuk and of course cheaply designed. PICK IT UP: HEH
YAH YAH YIP! THEN THERES THE DOLLAR TABLE SALT
SHAKERS PLASTIC CHINAMEN SWORDFISH WITH NO
SWORDS PRAYING HANDS THE BABY JESUS OR JESUS Sr.
WHICH EVER, AND DONT FORGET THE WIGGLY SNAKES–

WHEN YOU WALK THROUGH THE WETNESS YOUR FEET
GET WET AND COLD AND WHEN THERES UNHAPPINESS PRE–
SENT STARTING YOU IN THE FACE WHY NOT GET SAD OR
CRY IF IT MATTERS ENOUGH. BUT DONT FORGET TO PAY
THE MAN IN THE BOOTH A DOLLAR . . . .

I FELT ILL AT EASE, RAVISHED BY SADNESS AND
DESPAIR TRUMPING UP ILLUSIONS OF A LOVE DYING BY
ATTRITION. CRYING ON EACH OTHERS SHOULDERS, THEN
MAKING LOVE, MAKING IT ALL RIGHT AGAIN, AND WHEN
YOU LEAVE WATCH OUT FOR THE ICE ON THE BRIDGE IT
DOESNT MATTER HOW SAFE YOU ARE WATCH IT OR WHAM!
DISASTER. SOMEONE ELSE MIGHT NOT MAKE IT, THEY'LL
SOMEONE HAS TO, THEY ALWAYS DO SADNESS AGAIN
UNNECESSARY BUT NECESSARY

WHEN I DIE IT ALL STARTS OVER AGAIN IVE PROBABLY
DIE SEVERAL TIMES BEFORE, THATS HELL. KEEP LIVING
OVER AND OVER JUST LIKE THOSE HALLUCINATIONS
WHEN YOURE TIRED AND SEE THE VIRGIN MARY IN THE
ICE. IM DYING ITS ALL A FLASHBACK RIGHT TO THE MO–
MENT I DIE AND THEN IM DEAD. PAY THE MAN IN THE
BOOTH A DOLLAR, MAKE YOUR LOVE PLAY WITH THE
RUBBER TOMAHAWKS AND WHEN YOU WALK UP THE STEPS
YOURE OUTSIDE AGAIN. LOOK IN MIRRORS. AM I TOO FAT?
DOES MY HAIR LOOK RIGHT? I NEED SOME PANTS I NEED
TO PISS I NEED TO GO IM GOING TO BED. JUST LIKE THE
DOG OR JUST LIKE HER (HER IS ANYONE YOU WANT DONT

ASK FOR CHARACTERIZATIONS USE YOUR OWN MIND DONT DISCUSS IT DO WHAT YOU WANT WITH IT DONT BE AN IM— BECILE YOUVE GOT YOUR OWN IMAGINATION OR DO YOU — WALK UP THE STEPS BUT DONT ASK ME (ME) STUPID SHIT) JUST LIKE BOTH OF THEM YOU WALK AROUND IN THE FIELD AND YOURE BOUND TO PICK UP BEGGAR LICE OR, OR WHATEVER, OR MAYBE. HE Ya Ya YIP!

—Jeff Varas

Edingsville Beach

Cold rain, January rain,
Splatters the sand and bites at my face.
Edingsville stretches into the mist ahead.
Long-fallen palmettos
Litter the high tide line
And add their dark brown wetness
To the shell-scattered distance.
No houses stand against the winter storms
Of Edingsville.
Only the sand flats keep the sea
From creeping into the saline marshes.
Once there were house here —
The handmade bricks that wash ashore
Tell of their end.
The storms and tides of years now dead
Leave very few relics of that past.

Not long ago a bulldozer came
To level the dunes and uproot the trees.
Hotels and roads would have paved the sand
And killed the marsh.
But money gave out, and now the machines
Are gone. Only the sand remains.
And the sea reclaims the beach —
Three feet or more a year.

— John Lane

SKILLFUL MASTER OF THE SKY

icy morning air cold against my face,
crystallizing and scattering my senses
across the frozen tundra.
eyes dried by cold blowing air
blinking constantly to keep the clear
so hard to escape the forceful gusts of wind,
turning skilled maneuvers into
immediate regression, sending me close to
the tops of the trees, those trees waiting
to take me viotim, as so many a poor
windflight has known.
liquid dripping from my nostrils,
hunger bounding through my weakened body,
meticulously searching the snow-glazed tundra.
a snow-covered rock? a shivering stone?
Has drunken hunger deceived my
gift of sight or has this sense
made mockery of his only art?
ceremonial flight — no man can equal
the skillful master of the sky —
stops the hustling fox squirrel,
freezes doe and fawn into instant awareness,
silences the wind, audience to survival,
frenzied scamper, screaming shadow close behind,
protruding claws rip fur and flesh,
velvet white magically converted into scarlet,
warmth rushes through frigid feet,
a disdainful glow of truimph burns inside.
mother's ears alert from nestled warmth,
a bewildered agony, burning, freezing,
a distant cry breaks the hollow silence,
then slowly fades awa . . .

brilliant silver tundra, minute tracks —
blotted red — drift of light snow

— L. R. Perry, Jr.

CONES OF THE WHITE PINE IN THE CORNER OF THE YARD

Cones of the white pine
In the corner of the yard
Dangle from strings at precise
Intervals
On thick-scaled braches;
Pine chimes clatter
In the chill
Of a fullstar night.
Short needled, long needled
Fan for the cones
Blankets the innocence
Of the children
Until they are blown
To the reality
Of the ground, the yard,
Destined to be stepped on,
Or left alone,
Or picked up
And held in the warmth
Of a hollow hand
Until both the cone and the hand
Wither away with age.

— Mark Taylor

MOTHER'S DAY

I saw you look at me

From across the terminal,

Changing as I looked at you.

Like the *cliches* of drunken conversation,

You were just an old lady

And I really wanted to talk with you again.

But I had to try not to remember –

I was leaving.

I'm sorry . . .

– Danny Kimberlain

SEASCAPE

We found a fragile, moon-winged shell,
An open compact, hinged, translucent.
We handled it until it broke apart.
The shore became a crust, a rind,
And only silent words lay underfoot.

— Clay Brittain

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THE JOURNAL

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VOL. LXXXVII, No. 4

STREAM – FEEDING

Snowbroth poet

sits

by the Amarogawa

writing

vice-powder precision;

Tracery

on oil paper.

GYPSY

Holding half-filled glasses of rum and tonic,

We stand before each other like frontier marshalls
in a western showdown.

My smile and your easy gestures help us maintain
our social fascade,

And not show our embarrassment at this untidy event.

I begin to speak, but you become a floating green speck
that moves up,
and then down,
with the vast sea of people.

Looking up, I see you talking to others,

But I am unable to turn away without contempt—

The contempt of all mankind toward woman.

My eyes pass over the crowd searching for an understanding fa

But your laughter brings me back only to scenes of you—
you without me.

Gulping down the lasts swallows of a drink that is in bad
need of refreshment,

I move quickly through the polite crowd out the door and
to my car.

Alone, I leave the drinks, the party, and you.

A REBEL'S CRY

Call me an ignoramus,
Tag me a desperate soul
And leave me to the vultures—
Your writings have no goal.

Hit a happy medium—
I'd like to see you try.
Be a guest of Kissinger—
I'd like to ask you why.

You seem so very confident.
Always a know-it-all.
I think your omniscience is a farce
And someday you will fall.

QUEEN AND WORKERS

There is an eight-hundred acre nursery farm isolated in central Georgia. A colonial house overlooks the farm, and a barn is located beyond the pine grove down from the house. On the other side of the barn is an elongated green-house filled with potted plants. Beside the barn is a propagation house which on a hot day resembles a steam bath. Directly parallel with the green-house is an irrigated field, where various types of plants are arranged according to species. After a good irrigation rain you can see the clouds of steam rising off the black plastic placed under the potted plants. As you look across the lake, where there are geese and duck, into the irrigated field, you see a black Labrador retriever, named Jasper, gallivanting among the pots, splashing in the warm water.

When I came to work the road was dry and dusty; the hot summer morning was already approaching the glare of midday. Overhead the hollow stretch of wispy clouds was slowly retreating from the coming sun. I noticed that the field hands had already arrived; they waved to me when I drove in. I parked beside the barn. As I opened my trunk to get my gloves I noticed little mounds of dust on my bumper. Today would be dry and slow I thought, walking toward the barn to greet the hands.

Before I reached the barn Mrs. Symmes, the owner, made her appearance. She pranced out in green khakis, heavy blouse, and leather boots to give her commands for the day. "Nick," pointing at me, " you and Clarence go to the deer field and pull weeds. CB and CH poison the Corniasters with the poison. Dela May will fix up for you, she'll show you how. You women pot in the barn; Dela May will show you what to pot." Wiping the perspiration off her brow with a plaid handkerchief, she told Molly to come with her to make some phone calls.

CB said, "Shit, don't wanta be getting that burning poison on me, today being Friday."

"Come five-oclock, the eagle gonna fly," Clarence mumbled.

Well I guessed the eagle would fly today, but it never flew high for me. I figured Clarence and I had better head on toward the deer field.

Walking down the rutted road beside the green-house I could hear the wind lifting the plastic cover gently, so maybe it would not be so hot after all.

Throwing his head back and mumbling through his tobacco, Clarence chuckled, "The eagle gonna fly today; I'm gonna get me a good supper tonight; what you think of that, eh?"

"Yeah? What you gonna have?" I asked,

"You ain't got no worry, you can go out and spend youran money on anything; you got plenty."

We began to walk faster up the hill to the deer field. I was wondering if I would have enough money to meet my bills for the week. We reached the fields and started hoeing the long rows of plants. The sun sucked water out of us like a sweating piece of burning pine. We moved into the woods for a break.

"Mrs. Symmes is a good woman," Clarence said, "but she don't know what she's talking 'bout. Ever since Mr. Symmes died this place has been the same. Mr. Symmes tried something new all the time, sometimes even given us a raise. I'm too old to be moving on, so I just stay here."

We started back to work, and at ten till twelve we walked to the barn. We sat around in the dark, dusty barn eating the box lunches we had fixed before coming to work. As I glanced around the black faces I could see many hard years worn into the rough, leathery skin.

Dela May finished eating and placed her scraps back into the box and started down to the lake to do her daily fishing. As she walked out she hollered over her shoulder that we better load the magnolias. They were lined up beside the barn for a truck that was to come in soon.

The flat-bed diesel rig pulled down beside the barn. Mrs. Symmes followed it in her station wagon with Jasper perched in the back She greeted the gentleman on the passenger's side of the cab. The two of them stepped into the office to discuss future business. As they passed me, Mrs. Symmes asked politely if I would make up the bill. I said I would—and in the tone of my words I heard an echo of the hands' soft voices. I proceeded to make up the bill for a thousand eight-foot magnolias at seventeen dollars apiece. Finishing, I walked in and gave the bill to the gentleman, only to overhear him exclaiming how cheap the plants were, that other wholesalers were three or more dollars higher.

I began to help the men load, as the women, secured the balls of soiled roots that were burlapped. The magnolias had been propagated here, put into cans, watered and fertilized, then transferred to the fields to be pruned and fertilized until sold. The whole process was done by the hand with little super vision. We had worked overtime the previous week in order to be able to dig, ball and burlap the plants to fill the order.

CB asked Clarence, "How much you think one o'these flowers worth?"

Clarence, who was very vain, exclaimed, "Five dollar!"

A little after five I was walking to the car, with my check in my hand, thinking about the night's plans, when Clarence skipped out of the barn, exclaiming, "The eagle done flew!"

CB grinned, chanting with the others, "The eagle done flew!"

WATERCOURSE I

Babble, babble, babble brook
See the stream struggling over boulders
Sliding it's way down, down to the sea
Not stopping, starting, sitting or standing
Instead it lies at our feet full of wonder
fissing, fuming, flowing, fighting
Through fissures of rock that halt and hinder,
That hold its headlong search for movement
Like glistening diamonds dancing in daylight
And moistened needles of neon in the night
Moving history between the pools
Valleys never dipped or rolled before it
But through death dust and drought
It slides on forever to go by us but never ends.

COLLECTING SNAKES AT THE ABANDONED GRANITE QUARRY

When we leave the paved roads
And go into the woods,
The world seems distant and unimportant.
Only the rusted Blue Ribbons
Remind us that people know the quarry.
As we push through the scrub pines,
Thoughts of our first time down this path
Tell us the quarry is just ahead.
Suddenly — one sheer gray cliff
Drops to the floor below:
The quarry looks like an immense heel print.

The walls decrease in height
Until huge stone boulders spill into the woods.
Pine trees dominate the rim
And also spring from the quarry floor.
These are trees that grow after the trucks have gone.

We pick our way over the cracking granite
And abandoned blasting holes,
Scanning the dry rock ledges that lie
Exposed to the late afternoon sun.
A shed skin catches the light:
Brown and translucent,
Buzzing with yellow jackets not yet
Killed by the frost.
The skin, moist when shed, has now dried
To a fragile, scaled thinness
On the warm, lichen-covered rock.
Several quick brown fence lizards
Stand sunning, undisturbed,
As we move down over the ledges.
We are nearly on them when they slip
Into a crevice, to appear on a rock
Twenty feet away.

The quarry floor is covered
With the long-frozen thunder
Of fallen granite slabs.
The stones we kick and walk on
Range from gray gravel to baseball-
Sized hunks and blade-edged rocks
Left behind by blasting caps.

We turn to look back at the top of the cliff.
The copper-colored sunlight
Streams through the trees and boulders.
Dark granite lives with long
Slow shadows crawl among the rocks
As we walk along the pine floor
Under the dying sky.

Winner, collective first place, A. J. R. Helmus Poetry Contest, 1975

THE RIVER LIFFEY

The Liffey slides back from the sea
And climbs the walls
To the top of its stain.
It hangs limp
In the tide's chains.
It lolls down the stone channel,
Dark with the stench of Dublin—
Bearing rats
Past granite docks.
Perhaps it buckles and churns
When the moon lowers it
Back into the waves.
But here it rolls like thick blood—
Wrinkling in the wind without sound.
Brittle trees by the walls
Gouge the pale air.
Bulls bark—
Hinged ashes
Winding down.

Winner, collective first place, A. J. K. Helmus Poetry Contest, 1975

NOCTURNAL ENIGMA

In the dark of night,
in the night of dark
beneath the nascent willow buds
the moon foams through the leaves
casting rainbows of white upon the earth.

Delicate trickles of verdant grass
etch patterns that will never last.
The wind cracks the willow's pliant whips
and opens the gate's rusty mouth.

Shiva: You are the moon.
You are the sun.
You are the light.

From the bowl of your love
all people are
happy in dizziness.

Sita: You are the gate of my eyes
If you go, I lose the world.

Shiva: My heart is boiling
From your Fire love.
Where are you?
Come now! Come now!
From anxiousness to gaze at you
my heart is still burning.

Sita: I am perplexed.
I will not turn
from your love.
What can I make happen?
There is no channel to shelter
except you.

Day and night
My eyes wait
for your face.

Shiva: Watch my face
you will be embarrassed
to see all the love there.
You will be guilty
As if for a sin.

Sita: If you go, I must ask:
Where do I come from?
For what did I come?
Where do I go?
without you.
These questions will fall on me.

Shiva: If you go,
This song will fall apart.
The world will pour down on me
In Hell-like uninterpretable noises.

PIECES OF LEATHER

What have they done to me?

A few hours ago I was the cover of a fatastically strong and powerful bull. And could that be Judy in the corner?

Yes, I think it is.

Is she calling me?

"John, John where are we?"

"Judy, we appear to be in some sort of truck, I remember seeing these things ride by many times when I was the covering of the bull.

Let's just try to get some sleep. Maybe we will feel a little better in the morning."

In the morning when we woke up I over-heard one human say to another, Hey, how about taking these two pieces of leather, the black and brown one, to the treatment room. That's all that needs to be done to them before we ship them out."

What had Judy and I missed? Before I had time even to think this question, I could feel myself and Judy being taken into another room. Fifteen seconds later I felt myself passing out from all of the heat and chemicals being put into my once furry surface. As I closed my eyes I could see tears streaming from Judy's but I couldn't stay conscious any longer.

When I came to, I found myself in the hands of what appeared to me to be an old man. All around me I could see my friends. But instead of being shaped like myself, they all had been sewn and molded into elongated circular-like structures.

I saw to my left a box with words "Wilson's shoe shop for men" written upon it. Before I knew it, I could feel the old Man's worn and experienced hands gently molding me into a figure shaped similarly to my buddies.

When the old man finally finished with me he carried me to the front of his store. As the humans passed by I could feel their eyes upon me.

A sudden sadness hit me, as I realized I had not seen Judy since we were taken to the treatment room. I became more and more depressed as I wondered where in the world she could be.

Days and days passed before anything ever happened to me. Finally, at the end of what seemed to me to be an almost endless day, a young human entered the store, took me from the window, slid me onto his feet, gave something to the old man, and walked out with me upon his feet.

Even though a whole new world opened up for me, there was still no Judy, what had happened to my leatherette friend.

After a few weeks on the feet of the young man, things again began to get tiring. Everyday seemed to be just like the one before it.

One day, though, while I was in some sort of eating place and had the strange feeling that someone I knew very well was near me. As the young man moved me around a bit, I got into a better position to look around me. To the surprise of my life, I saw my long-lost love, Judy. As if responding to my very wish, the young man walked me over towards her. As he conversed with the young girl, I did the same with Judy.

"Oh, how I missed you, Judy. I didn't think I could stand the strain much longer."

"I feel exactly the same way," Judy said. " I have been the prisoner of this girl for three unbelievable months, and seeing you is the answer to my dreams."

Feeling better than I had in who knows when, I walked out of the restaurant with my laces feeling lighter than ever before. Somehow I felt that everything could be all right for us again.

GRANDMAW

I have seen her cross
Her be-spattered kitchen.
She carries black molasses
And lifts golden cornbread
In silent vacant offering.

I have seen her rock in
The heat of a sun that
Steams a swamp glaring
At her porch.
The rocker creaks, she stares right back.

I have seen her tread her
Southern ways—
Down, down, down—
Like the roots of a dead oak tree
With a trunk of a hundred rings.

Wrinkled woman, she crosses the path,
While a leaf, dust brown, slips
Quietly past her ear,
Gently grazing her shoulder;
It falls to black ooze,
To an earthy apse.

She turns as if she has
Caught a whisper,
Wrinkles her lips
On her crackling face.
The smile fades when
Nothing is seen;
And where she stood,
More leaves fall— in
Southern ways.

Winner, third place, A. J. R. Helmus Poetry Contest, 1975

AGING

Mike Scott is gone.
And it seems so long
walking back again.
The group at my table
has shifted with time,
And not one of them noticed me
as I seated myself.
Maybe dreams do come true
for those who live in slumber;
But I fear I have
pulled the morning shutters
far to soon,
To a light almost blinding.
It was very cold,
when a leaf flutterd
to sidewalk;
And walking on
I passed it by, unnoticed.
The air seeped inside.
The candle dwindled out,
And I left
the same way I arrived.

LOWER EAST SIDE

"Kitty Carlyle come on down."

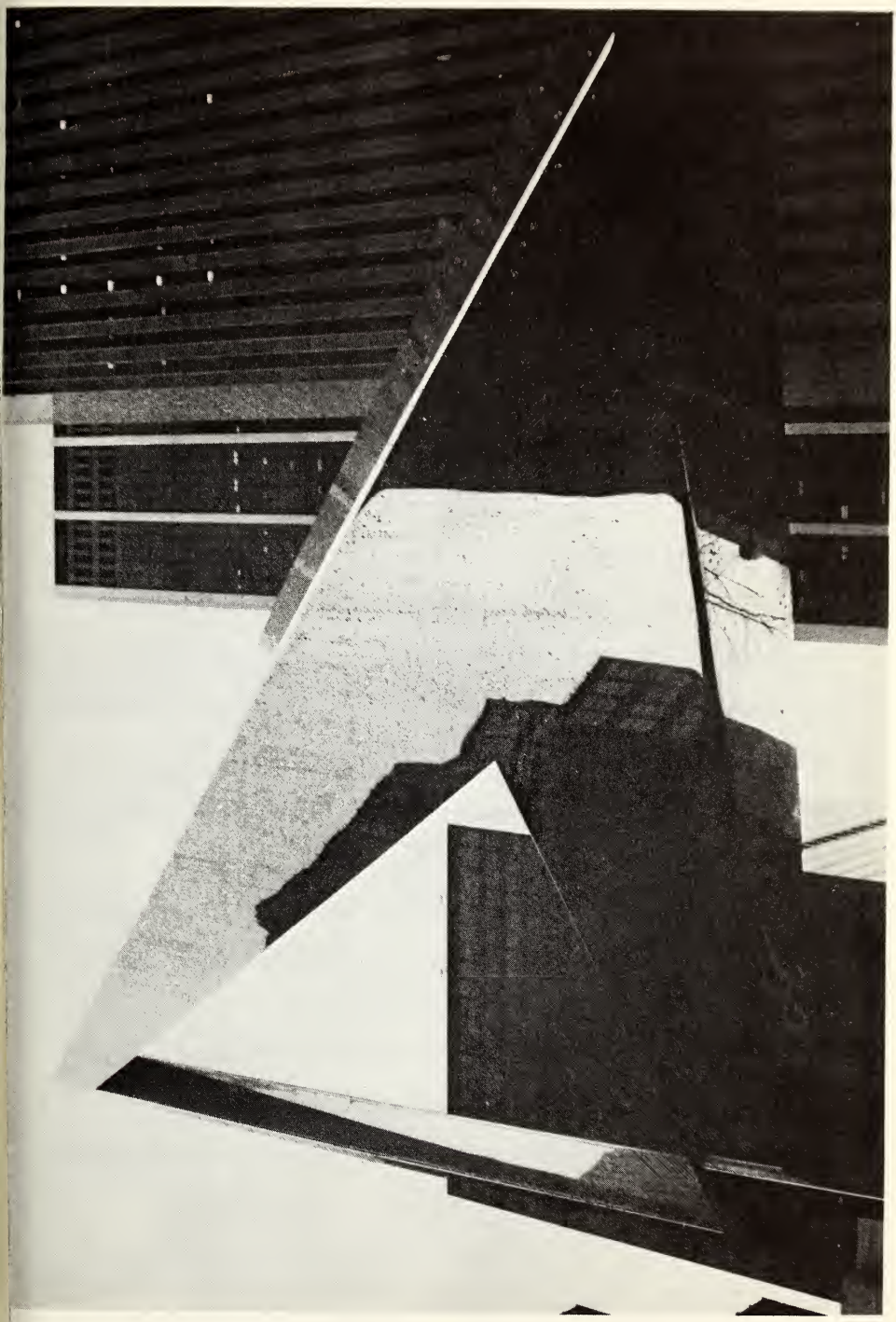
He lives between Fourteenth and Fulton
between Bowery and East River as well.
A strip less than a mile long, of brick
and soot and sin.

He's dressed in black Victorian stench
and suffers chronic languish.
His appetite consists of guilt,
of whores and bums and thieves.

A belch of countless fruitstands
does little to cover his smell.
An odor soft but pungent
offends and never ends.

I went to see my cheap, mean friend.
I waited late that night.
He had some guests awaiting me
that numbed my nervous brain.
A wrinkled man, extended his hand
and asked me for a quarter.
I ran from him and hit a pimp—
who cussed me for an hour.
Some thugs came up and scared my guts,
my host cared not at all.

I left the scene and called a cab
was glad to leave at last.
So safe, thank God, am I right now,
perhaps I'll go tomorrow.



I HAVE LIVED

I have breathed the freshness of the ocean air.

I have cast my billowing white sails clear to the top of the sky.

I have sensed the power of the sea as stays moan in the wind and the bow cuts crisply through mending swells.

I have felt the freshness of a salty mist, cast up from a cresting wave, upon my face.

I have ridden out the storm with its lashing winds and raging sea consuming all the earth in their eerie darkness.

I have sweltered in the fiery heat of a merciless sun while becalmed by a forgotten wind.

I have felt the ache of calluses and burns upon my hands from the harshness of a serpentine line drawn tight against the wind.

I have guided the trembling tiller on a true course across the glistening water with its secret depths of ebony.

I have found sleep within the gentle sway of my ship and the lapping of ripples upon her keel.

I have seen with awesome reverence the sinking of the sun into the sea.

I have heard the first cries of a gull as the sun in all its splendor leaps up from the cast to shatter the darkness.

I have laid with eyes to heaven, contemplating a billion tiny embers calling forth their dreams from the evening skies.

Yes, all these things are with me and I shall forever be able to say that I have lived.

CLINGING

The blue and white
Drain after the sun.
Branches claw the sun.
Branches claw the spilling sky,
But the grey soaks to the ground
Through black trees.

Dim stars emerge
And small human noises
Spread from the wan insides
Of shadow houses.

A black horizon
Gathers around the yard.

In the clearing emptiness —
Space falls into the stars.
The earth is loose.

LOSING SLEEP

Every dusk you come to me,
chained to my rock, my eyes smoking the sunset.
You hold my head,
moisten my eyes with your tongue.
It stings like a scorpion, but afterward I'm grateful.

When I turn my head you leave.
Air fills your space,
so I put words where you were
and let you keep me awake.
You've done this for weeks.

Dark again, chained still.
No one comes to lick my eyes.
Have you forgotten me,
left me with the sun and a rock,
returned my sleep?

With the sound of crashing glass
my eyes roll over my head.
4 o'clock: dark.
I haven't slept in weeks
I have no eyelids.

DOG IN THE STORM

Thunder,
from the east that scares the dog,

Hangs in the distance—
swinging like a dead man.

Crazy arms that are leaf-covered

Grab

and

Clutch

through the glass of my window,

Shaking wooden fist at my indifference to the world.

Laughing,

I slide cat-like in the covers of my bed,

Convincing myself that trees are not human—

"They cannot cry."
"They cannot see."
"They cannot feel."

I close my eyes, but still sense the hanging tree
In the flash of light.

I call my dog,

Together we are gaurdians of the night.

GROWING THINGS

There was one spot in the Main Hall that Walt drifted to every Tuesday and Thursday just before class. He had no conscious awareness that the spot was his own, but somehow the place held some vague attraction for him.

There was a pillar there, a concrete pillar that he knew had no function whatsoever. Pillars in modern buildings are for decoration only, Walt was sure, Similar yellow monoliths jutted from the slick tiles along the Hall, with one face buried in the wall as if hiding from the faces passing by. He sat down and closed his eyes.

He found something eminently soothing in the feel of the pillar's cool surface; an icy hand that froze and the, hammer-like, shattered the in—frequent flashes of passion within him. He could lose himself in its solidity and try to become part of it, or at least like it. He snuggled up to the pillar with his back and slid to the floor.

He caught himself wondering if that piece of stone would ever snuggle back and laughed at himself. Still, the idea was rather frightening somehow. But eventually he felt welcome lethargy drag him under, and he breathed a bit easier.

With a crack of burning sulphur from a wooden match he lit a cigarette with his characteristic suave gesture, moving the head of the match in a cometary arc from box to tobacco. Reverently he inhaled the vapors, and then sputed a stream of smoke rings that reminded him of concentric circles racing across the surface of a pond into which a rock has been thrown. Circles that searched for the shore only to reach it and be reflected back to begin again.

He giggled aloud at that. I'm becoming a bloody poet, he thought.

Footsteps caused him to turn his head. Doc Simpson was coming up the Hall. When he saw Walt, he said, "Hello, Walt. What are you doing here so early? Class doesn't begin for another fifteen minutes."

Walt liked Simpson. He was a kindly, middle-aged man who worked like hell getting his students to understand the "mysteries of chemistry," as he put it. Every year Simpson put in an extraordinary amount of time holding special lectures for his slower students. Walt had helped him with a few of these, organizing notes and demonstration equipment.

"Got up early and didn't feel like hanging around the house. I decided to come to school. Say, do you need any help?"

"Thanks, but no thanks. I just have my briefcase to carry."

"Oh, not with that," Walt smiled. "I meant with your next special lecture. I sort of enjoy it."

"Uh, no. I'll only be using a few books this afternoon. Well, take it easy. See you in class." Simpson seemed discomfited as he turned towards his office. Walt hadn't been doing very well in class lately. He couldn't very well justify using a helper who often didn't understand the lecture himself. He was sure that Walt was disturbed over the Kepley girl getting married a while ago. Had the boy been that much in love with her? And if so, what could he say to him? He reached his office door, entered and shut it behind him.

Walt was puzzled by the scientist's behavior. True, he hadn't held any lectures for some time now since most of the classes he had were upper level, but mid-term grades had just come out and there had been a few failures. It was usual for him to start them now, and it was usual for Walt to help him.

Then he got it— mid-terms. His face bloomed with a sardonic grin and he took another drag from his cigarette, as the pillar got a bit warmer from his body heat.

Sally Kepley woke at 8:30, forty-five minutes later than usual, with the rather revolting realization that she had thirty minutes to inhale a cup of coffee and two cigarettes, wriggle into slacks and blouse, and hurry to class in her usual groaning manner. "Oh, hell!" was the only phrase she could conjure up suitable to the occasion. With great consternation and little energy she stumbled out of bed and shuffled into the kitchen, feet serving temporarily as eyes until the blood drained from the whites surrounding her pine-green pupils.

Her husband, Jim, had left for work earlier that morning. Vaguely she remembered the springs tossing her up as the weight on the bed-springs lessened. She had fought not to waken, he had not even bothered to call her. . Which is no wonder, she thought, filling the kettle with water. After that bitch of a fight last night, it surprises me that he even had the nerve to get in the same bed with me. She gave one of her rare morning smiles as she visualized the scene which would have taken place if he had tried to rouse her. She would probably have had to call the fire department to get him off the roof.

The smile slipped away, sloughed off by the recollection of the argument. The son-of-a-bitch! no, he's not; we just don't look at things the same way. Still, he had no right to accuse her of forcing him into a corner with her "bullshit about ambition." All she had said was that she didn't think that he was getting anywhere too quickly. They had been married for a month and a half, and he had shown no signs of looking for

a new job to support them. This rotten apartment was okay to crash in, but it sure as hell wasn't a home.

Then he had bitched about her going to school Sally had thought that argument had been settled before they decided definitely to get married; she wanted a career. She didn't exactly consider herself a libber, but she knew from childhood chores that housework simply wasn't her cup of tea. Oh, well— lots of things turn up in a really bad argument. Probably just angry words.

It bothered her nonetheless. The whole thing bothered her.

Walt snapped his head up, shocked at the sound fo his name. Sally Kepley was standing a few feet in front of him; he ground his cigarette in to the floor.

"H-hello, Sally." The start turned into a slight trembling. "How've you been?"

She gave him a sweet smile, and mentally he cringed. "Fine. Jim and I. . ." She broke off, turning a bit red.

Walt's eyes glazed over at the sound of her husband's name. He didn't feel like saying anything, but silence would be a lot worse than automatic small talk. "How is the old man? Didn't I hear that he was still working at the plant? Must be nice to have a steady income, a place of your own, and all that."

She smiled again, and Walt noticed how the corners of her lips seemed to vanish into her face. "You probably did hear. And the place isn't so great. But we're making out okay. Anyway, his job keeps him our of my hair when I'm at home." She chuckled nervously, and examined him soberly for a moment, wondering if he was really beginning to loosen up. She had tried to talk to him once before soon after they had announced the wedding, but he had simply looked at her with those same glazed eyes, and then walked away without a word. At least he was talking now.

Walt echoed her chuckle, Maybe he is loosening up, she thought. 'bout time! Better not push him though. "Look, I've gotta head for class. Call me, okay? I haven't seen you in a while." She felt better about him now. What a ruckus he had raised when she had told him about Jim! "See you." She smiled at him again, then stepped by him and headed down the hall.

Walt watched her receding form with its swishing tail and scowled. Call her sometime! I'll be goddamned! Is that all I rate? After a year of all I could give? After roses, and dinners, and rings, and walks in the park, and yeah, even the beds we sweated on. Bitch.

Students pouring into the building, signalled the beginning of class. People were saying hello, but Walt didn't hear them. He got up and left the building just as Simpson came out of his office. The Doc started to call to him to ask him why he wasn't coming to class, then decided that the question would sound snoopy. He went on into the classroom.

The warmth on the pillar where Walt had been sitting rapidly dissapated into the air as a janitor swept up in the hall, neatly swishing the cigarette butts into a dust-pan.

Mrs. Long was forty-five years old, and looked every minute of it. She knew it, but she never told anyone that she did. She looked at it this way; Everybody is getting older all the time. No use getting people upset about their own age by calling attention to mine. Besides, people improve with age.

Her whole drawerful of cosmetics insured the improvement was noticeable. She was a divorcee, and she liked to have dinner with a man occasionally. Men like women to look pretty. Get rid of a bit of grey, color the eyelashes, cream the cheeks, and maybe you'll have a whole drawerful of men.

She was putting cold cream on her cheeks when she heard the door slam. She started. Apprehensively she called out, "Who is it?" All sorts of people in the world these days. You never know. . .

Walt's voice answered her. "Only me." She heard him stomping up the stairs and walked out of her room to the landing.

"What are you doing home so early? Did Dr. Simpson decide not to hold class today?"

"No, I just didn't feel like facing him or any class today. I. . ."

"Are you catching cold? I told you not to go out bare-footed yesterday. You. ."

"Oh, knock it off, will you, Mom! You're beginning to sound like a soap-opera. A cancelled one at that. I'm in a lousy mood, that's all."

"Well, I worry about you." Mrs. Long put on her best look of motherly concern. "Now, you know that you just can't cut class anytime you don't feel like going. Part of the idea of going to college is to teach you discipline. If you keep up like this, pretty soon you won't be going at all."

Cooly, with a touch of sardonic humor, he said, "Go--to--hell." This time her eyebrows really went up. She turned an apopletic purple. He stepped around her and walked into his room, closing the door unhur-

riedly behind him. He knew from experience that she would not explode immediately, but would wait 'til the next time she saw him. He listened for the slam of her room door that would let him know she had gone in to have her cry, and heard it about five seconds later. He breathed more easily. There was no reason to assume that she would change her pattern and come into his room to yell.

Mrs. Long was not crying though. She was finishing with her cream, while old cliches like, "I try to be a good mother," ran through her head like a silent flick from the 20's.

Walt didn't hate his mother, but he never had been able to understand her as well as he would have liked. Most of the guys he had talked to at school who still lived at home told him that they had managed to work out a fairly decent working relationship with their parents,.His mother had made that impossible. She relished treating him like a six year old. Maybe it had something to do with the divorce ten years ago. He just didn't know.

Why don't I leave? he mused. Because I don't have anywhere to go? With grim amusement he remembered a trick she had played on him when he was six, one that probably every parent has played on his children at one time. He had started to run away, and she had offered to help him pack his bag, and showed him to the front door. When he got outside, he realized that he had no earthly idea of where to go. So he walked around the block, came back, knocked on the door, and got his ass beaten off with a belt. The Prodigal Son? What a laugh!

But coming back had been a lot better than wandering around the block with no place to go. Even now he always came back.

I go back, he thought. Scientists are supposed to look at the present with an occasional glance at the future, but I look back to Sally. His coment to his mother about the soap-opera rang in his head, and he laughed out loud. That damned girl was turning him into a bad Hamlet. There were times, though. . . He drifted.

Sand was gritting in his crotch as he tasted salt. The moans beneath him. Told him he was doing okay. He turned his head. And saw the man-in-the-moon. Looking at him. Shocked him almost impotent. Lousy voyeur. Disturbed his rhythm. He stared at Sally. Her face framed by the yellow blanket. That matched her hair. Eyes closed. Moaning softly. The sweaty slickness between her breasts. And then his eyes closed.

Dinner at the Diplomat. Golden hair rippling over a wheat-colored gown. Filet Mignon. Words of Love. He smiled at her.

Later they talked about their futures. Which brought up chemistry. And other things, mostly sacramental and legal. No decisions, except in the choice of wines.

Jim Kepley. At a party. Huskey son-of-a-bitch. Sally making eyes at him. Naw, I'm just drunk. Looks like she is, though. Bastard's real masculine type, has a job too, and is two years older than you. Maybe I should be jealous? Naw, I'm just drunk.

You bet you are, brother. Better stay that way. Or stick to verifiable facts that come up and bite you on the arse so you can't miss them.

You bet you are, brother.

Near the end of her last class of the day, Sally found herself gazing out of a window, musing, oblivious to the lecture and the brilliant (perhaps) comments of her classmates.

"What are you dreaming about, Mrs. Kepley?" So many students slept in his class that Professor Healy just loved to startle them and force the red on their faces to deepen by smiling at them.

Sally was used to his tactics, but today she felt that she just couldn't let it pass. "I'm dreaming about getting out of here. Excuse me, I have to powder my nose." She got up and walked out, amusedly aware of the titter and the angry stare that followed her.

As she walked towards home, she felt a slight apprehension. This was Jim's day for an afternoon off. If he was there when she got back, there might be another fight since the one last night had never reached any sort of conclusion. She didn't feel like arguing; she didn't feel like doing anything. Fortunately, there was no car in the drive when she got home.

But that was cause for further apprehension. Had the jackass gone and wrecked the car? She shrugged and decided not to worry. Jim knew how to take care of himself. She went in and made some lunch. When she had finished she began to water her plants.

Sally's plants were her one hobby, and there were dozens of them throughout the apartment. She really believed in the notion that they understood human emotion and reacted favorably when you spoke kindly to them. She lavished affection on them.

In the process of watering, she came across the plant that Walt had given her some while ago. Naturally she thought of him and of her pleasure at discovering that he was finally beginning to accept things. She had loved him, in a way, but now that that was over, she still wanted him as a friend.

She caressed the leaves for a moment, then went on. She felt oddly content, and no longer cared whether or not Jim came home tonight. It would be just as well if he didn't, so she could have some peace of mind.

Walt perused the form and felt fear crystalize in his stomach like ice. It was momentary though, and he signed the paper with a flourish. God, what a day! He had had a fight with the registrar about dropping out.

"Look," Mr. Matson had said, "a couple of lousy grades is no reason to assume that you have no future in school. You have ability; I know from your records. Wait a bit, will you?"

"Are you going to give me the form so I can make it nice and legal, or am I just going to not show up for the rest of the semester? One way I can come back easily, the other makes it nearly impossible to recoup my loss in grades. But I am going to do what I plan to. So give me the form now, or I walk out of here with no option."

"Oh, all right." Matson had looked beaten, but at the same time he looked as if it was all the same to him. It probably was. The college was small, but that didn't mean that there weren't enough things to occupy his mind.

Just as he signed the form he heard a grunt of surprise. "Walt Long? Well, how are you old man?"

Walt glared at the face above him. Jim Kepley's presence on campus was one thing that up until now he had been spared. "Fine. What are you doing here?" One must be polite, he thought bitterly.

"Looking for Sally. I wanted to catch her right after her last class, but Healy told me she had left early. He didn't look too happy when I asked him about her. I suspect that she insulted him somehow. We had a fight last night, so she's probably not in the best of moods today. Seen her?" Kepley looked at him with something akin to suspicion. Walt could see no reason why he should be, but then Jim had never been known for rationale.

"No. Not since early this morning outside the lab. She seemed okay then." (To himself he thought, But maybe she wasn't) The thought almost made him smile.

"She say where she was going? No? Well, listen. . . Hey, is that a drop form. Have you lost your mind?"

"None of your business," Walt bristled.

Jim was grinning like a Chesire cat. "Sorry. You're right. None of my business. Guess she went home. See you later." He walked off with a slight swagger.

Walt payed no attention, and turned in the form at the secretary's desk.

Sally froze when she heard the door open. She thought furiously about what to say. Jim solved the problem by speaking first, "Where've you been. I've been on campus looking for you. And what the hell did you say to get Healy so up-tight?"

For no apparent reason, she felt anger welling up. Perhpas it was because the fight last night had never been finished. Even as she spoke she was aware that although it was she who had wanted to avoid a fight and now she was causing it. "Shouldn't make any difference to you," she snapped.

Jim was somewhat taken aback at her bitterness. Then he got riled. "Want to bet. You're my wife, aren't you? At least you're supposed to be. You spend most of your time bitching instead of loving lately. A month and a half and you're already middle-aged."

"I wouldn't gripe if you'd do something with your life. Instead, you work at that crummy factory for peanuts because you didn't have the balls to stay in school!"'

He laughed without humor. "I guess you should know whether I had 'em or not. I asked you last night, and I'll ask you again; why the hell should I stay in school? It's all the same, you know."

"The hell it is. With a degree you could really go places. If you think I want to live in this lousy rat hole for the rest of my life, you're not only mad, you don't even have a brain." She stood up as though to walk from the room. Jim caught her arm.

"So that's the way it is. Maybe you think you could have made a better choice in husbands. Like Walt Long, maybe?" He slapped her so hard her head swam. She sat back down with a thud. He had hit her? Her face twisted with disbelief. But what he was doing now was even more incomprehensible. He had walked over to the shelf and was pulling one of her plants down. He threw it on the floor and crushed it with his foot. With a shock she realized that it was the plant Walt had given her. But he didn't stop there; he began flailing his arms across the shelves, sweeping them all onto the floor. Then he turned and grinned, but it was not the malicious grin she had expected. There really was a touch of amusement in it. For some reason, this added another shock, so that she sat there mute and bewildered.

"You can have him, or anybody, if you want him. Give him a call. Go ahead. I'm leaving. But I'll be back tomorrow." His grin got just a touch wider. She just stared as he walked from the room, and finally came to her senses as the door slammed behind him.

"You imbecile! I wonder why I didn't strangle you as a child! You're going to march right back over there tomorrow and tear up the form. Then you're going to. . ."

Walt tuned her out and merely looked at her as if he were listening. That way she could get it all out, and he could hit her with the real bombshell. After about ten minutes she ran down, and her color began to return to normal. He had half hoped that she would keep going long enough for her to have a stroke. It would have solved a lot of problems. His mother was not exactly poor, but she gave him little money. If she were dead, however. . .

"I'm also leaving home to rent an apartment on the other side of town. Easier for me that way. Easier on you, too. You can entertain callers all you want without feeling guilty about having me around to see, right?" Her eyes grew impossibly large. He turned without a further word and went up to his room to pack a few things. When he came back down she was still sitting there with her eyeballs bulging. "See you sometime. We'll have dinner or something, right? Bye!"

Just then the phone rang. He hesitated for a second as most people do, wondering if it might be for him. Then he saw that she wasn't going to answer it. He wasn't even sure that she could hear it. He nearly let his face crack and laugh. Man, had he floored her. Purely to rub salt in the wound, he decided to answer the phone himself. Hearing him yak nonchantly to someone on the phone would probably make her pass out. He walked over to it.

"Hello, Yes. Who's this. . .Sally! What. . . Well, sure. I was even thinking of calling to ask that myself. An hour okay? I've got some things to do and. . . Fine. Okay, see you then." Now it was his turn to get bug-eyed. Sally wants me to come over? Why? Oh yeah, the fight Jim mentioned! It must have really blown up. He grinned so hard he thought his lips were going to split.

He walked back towards the front door and picked up his bags. His mother still had not moved, still made no sound. For a moment he began to worry a little, Then shrugged and walked out to his car.

Mrs. Long didn't move for over an hour. Then she got up and went in to her vanity to do her lashes. Paul Bailey was coming over later on, so she had to look her best.

The knock on the door made Sally whirl so quickly that she almost spilled the dust pan she was holding. She cried out, "Just a minute!", dumped the pan and put it and the broom in the tiny broom closet. Then she smoothed her blouse and went to the door.

"You're early. I thought you said about an hour and it's only been forty-five minutes. Come on in." Walts's face confronting hers had upset her. It was all well and good to plan something in the abstract, but actuality was something else again. Cold feet, she said to herself, come from walking on thin ice. Stiff upper lip, now, and etc. "Have a seat. Walt, I.."

He interrupted her, "Listen, Sally. I told you I was planning to call you. I was going to because I had something that I had to tell you. I was going to wait a bit and let you get the news from someone else, but then I learned that you and Jim had had a fight, and to be honest I figured that this would be the best time. You know I still love you. But that's not what I came over to say. I . . ."

Apprehension stiffened her as she asked, "How did you know about the fight? What new? What are you talking about?"

Walt looked sheepish, then smiled. "Well, you see, I. . .uh. . . I saw Jim at school and. . .terminated my relationship with the school. I'm planning to get a job out at the plant. I was thinking. . ."

"You what!" Sally screamed. Now it was all too clear why Jim had told her to call Walt. Jim was smart enough to know that out pettines she would take it as a dare and do it. She'd get him over here and screw the hell out of him to piss Jim off. He had seen Walt filling out the form, and knew that when Walt came over he would drop the bomb. "Why in God's name did you do that? You're crazy. All you worked for, all your. . . our. . . dreams. You bloody fool!.."

Walt shook his head. He had been prepared for a mild temper tantrum, maybe a little crying, or even indignation. But the desolation embodied in her tone shocked him silly; him quitting should please her. Maybe she was play-acting and over-doing the role. He decided to humor her and play his part.

"Look, I know it seems stupid to you, but I can't see where school is getting us. We learn a lot of crap, but we get nowhere fast, and it never seems to answer questions that are really important. Anyway, that's not the point, because maybe we could get the answers somehow. The point is, the point of all that work in there is to get out and make a few bucks. I asked myself this morning (I really still love you, you see) what it was that Jim Kepley had that Walt didn't; it's a fairly standard and reasonable question even if it is hackneyed. The answer came back in three parts; one important, one not so important, one of no importance. One was that he had you. But I was trying to remedy that. The not-so-important one was better looks and two years of age. But you always told me that looks didn't really matter, and I figure I'm at least five years ahead of Jim in mentality and maturity. So that could be discounted too. But

the important thing was that he had a job, he was making money. When you tie that in with the idea that college is supposed to help you in that goal, it seemed to fit, too. The problem was that Jim was making money now. I still have years of school to go, and I want you now.

"So I headed over to school and dropped. Then I planned to try to get you back. When you called, it felt like a dream. . ."

Sally's eyes filled with tears. "You poor jackass. You know why I called you? Of course you do. It was to take you to bed to make Jim mad. But I didn't know. And you don't understand at all. . . but then neither did I." A sob burst from her throat. "Get out of here!"

Now he was really puzzled. What was she talking about; "Sally, why. . what. . ."

Through a haze of tears, she stared at him with a pity that mirrored the feeling she had for herself. "Just go. Go back to school. Or take a job at the plant. But get out of here." She didn't scream; her voice rolled out with the calmness, the apathy of resignation. For some reason this puzzled Walt even more. But he saw it was no use, so he got up and left.

Just before he closed the door he looked back at her. She looked oddly like his mother when he had told her that he was leaving. She just sat there, unmoving and still.

That night at the dance. A week after they first met, He had taken her home. And kissed her for the first time. Beside the door to a yellow shutter. One of those kisses that promised much, much more.

Stars twinkling brilliantly as he left, so far away. Drunk with feeling. The car swerving as he twisted the wheel. The yellow light turning to red. Narrowly missing the other driver's fender. But he didn't care. He was happy.

Now this night. And proverbial as well as actual darkness. Not drunk tonight. No danger of narrow misses. It's a long road. And where am I going:

Back to the motel, idiot, so drive on.

The factory office was laid in red brick that was slowly going grey with soot from the smokestacks among the tin buildings in the center of the complex. The door was of clear glass, and someone had taken pains to keep it that way. Walt walked in. When he had decided to quit school, he had been fairly sure that the plant would hire him. They nearly always needed someone in the labs, and anyone who had a little knowledge of chemistry was almost sure to be hired. Walt knew a lot about chemistry.

So an hour later, after forms, talks, and tests. He found himself being led around the department he was to work in by a chubby little man who talked incessantly, "We got a real nice place here, and a good salary, too. Lots of chances to improve that if you try. Smart fellow like you should do okay. If you don't like something, let me know. I'm real concerned about the people who work under me. I try to. . .uh, take care of my boys." He guffawed coarsely and went on talking, but Walt was no longer listening.

I don't know what was eating her, but maybe she'll be okay in a few days. Then I'll try again. Maybe. . .

They had come to the lab section where Walt was assigned for tomorrow. "This here's your station. Not had, Huh?"

Walt looked at the yellow table and tile beneath it, and at the straw-colored stone column next to it, and smiled. There was a window to his left, out which he could see the smokestacks belching black grime that floated gently towards the city. He noticed a few shrubs in a little yard near the business office, and saw soot fall on the leaves and branches, slowly turning them black.

Walt lit a cigarette and blew a few smoke rings, and watched as they slowly expanded and drifted until they dissapated into the air.

FALCON FOISON

You sit on wind as wind
Winds down a thought
Of ghosts as black as shadows
Are on stone.

Secret flyways flicker in the
Old-time motion picture
Of your flight
Into the Hazel winter sun
Of lace

As outstretched Madonna wings
Mold wind blown clay-grey
Silhouettes
Into jagged rock below.

O, sacred foison bird,
Sit still in the lap
Of the wind
Like a thought
Of a black ghost . . . .

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